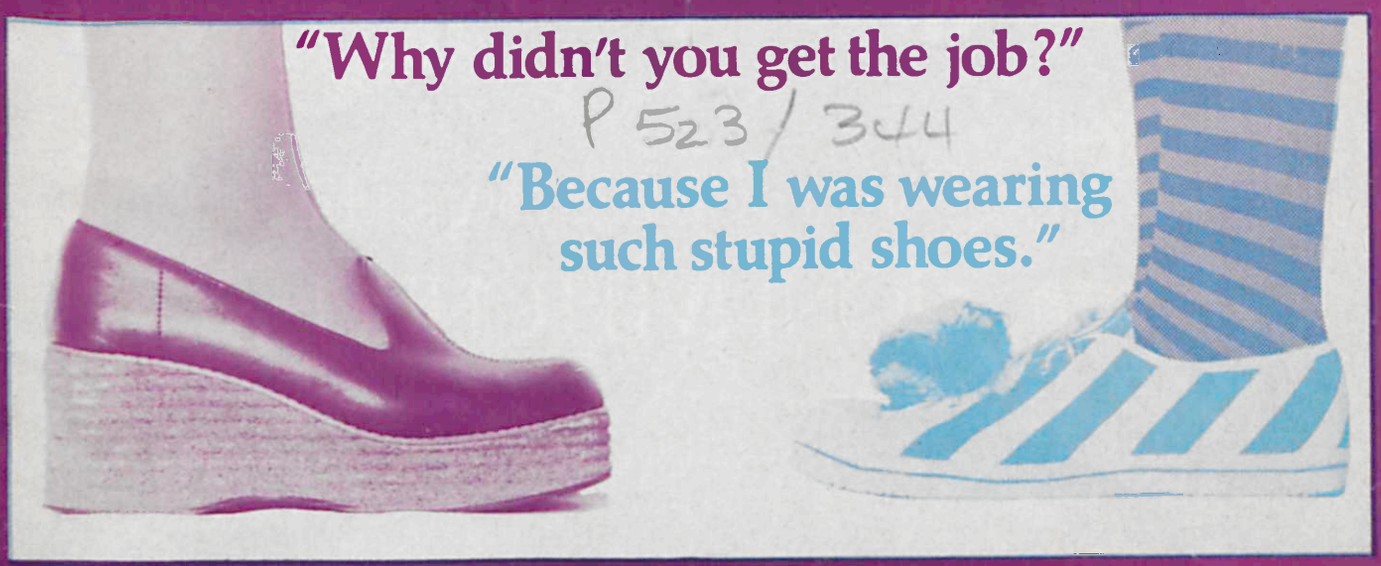
A WOMEN'S LIBERATION MAGAZINE JANUARY 1977 ISSUE 54 30 PENCE

spare Rib



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Thrush - natural remedies for The Bick Itch

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Bingo clubs, cleaners and Asian women on strike

Lesbians Ignite! court case

"When it comes to the crunch, men have more to lose." Dora Russell interview

GOING TO BRIGHTON?



What the critics have said about JONI MITCHELL

"She has forged a form of personal expression that is beyond imitation."
Melody Maker

"Far and away rock's foremost female song writer...Her talent is awesome in the extreme."
New Musical Express

"When other priests and prophets lose their magic, she is the one to whom we will return again and again. The still, small voice for those still, small hours of the night, telling us the truths we have to hear."
Sounds

But don't just listen to the critics. Listen to the album.



"HEJIRA."
Joni Mitchell's new album.

K53053

asylum

spare Rib

January 77



JOHN STURROCK (REPORT)

"*This is not so much a strike about pay, it is a strike about human dignity,*" says Jayaben Desai, Strike Committee Treasurer at Grunwick's, where 200 workers, mainly Asian women, have been out since August. It's very hard for an Asian woman to come out on strike and stand on a picket line in the full glare of publicity day after day. See report page 18 . . .

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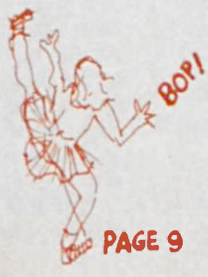
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Spare Rib is produced collectively by Rose Ades, Anny Brackx, Alison Fell, Victoria Green, Sue Hobbs, Wisty Hoyland, Susan Lambert, Laura Margolis, Jill Nicholls, Rozsika Parker, Linda Phillips, Jane Prince, Eleanor Stephens.
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Eating to Opt Out

★ Dear *Spare Rib*,

"And because we live through other people, we lose touch with where we begin and end. Eating all the time is an attempt to physically create a space around yourself, so that you're sure that here is where you are and there is where the world is. Paradoxically it blurs the distinction even more because women then feel non-defined: 'I'm all fat, all big, all flab.' " This paragraph from 'Fat Is A Feminist Issue' perfectly describes my experience. Thank you for raising the issue.

At first I thought if I made myself confess I'd be shamed into stopping, but now I think confessing is an extension of the self indulgence of eating. Compulsive eating is not indulgence in physical pleasure — the self indulgence is to make ourselves unfit to deal with the reality of our life in society. We may be unfit in other ways, and society may not be fit for us to live in, but instead of attempting to change things we opt out. This is negative self-assertion. When we confess we tell others we've opted out, and if they can't change us, we put the fault on them.

My negative self-assertion is compulsive eating itself, not fat, as I'm not overweight. I suppose overall I eat a normal quantity, but I'm obsessed with food and I eat in an abnormal way. Once I feel fat, big and flabby, whatever my weight, I'm in the paradoxical state described in the quotation. An all-out binge makes my skin very sensitive, so that I'm defined by my awareness of it enclosing me, but also non-defined because I can't escape painful contact with my clothes, objects, etc. This seems to me a physical parallel to the mental paradox.

I've been a compulsive eater about ten years. There have been two breaks when I thought I was cured, once when I was separated from the man I was living with and stayed with friends for several weeks and once when I was in hospital having a baby. Throughout those two breaks I ate what I needed with relish and had no desire to eat more. So I think for me nurturance is an important factor.

You haven't stated as a problem the fact that we can't give up food absolutely, like alcohol or cigarettes. I began smoking because I thought it would help me not to eat. It didn't, and I gave it up without difficulty after three years.

You have made it clear, though, that it's our attitude to food and our bodies that we have to change. I don't like the idea of working with mirrors. I look at myself far too much already, interpreting and re-interpreting tricks of light and the changes of posture that depend on what I've eaten, in terms of weight. The waste of time and energy is enormous. I need to be less self-conscious.

Name and address supplied.

Fat From Terror

★ Dear *Spare Rib*,

My feeling behind the fat is funk. But I'm not afraid of any of the things or situations you describe in 'Fat Is A Feminist Issue' in *Spare Rib*. I'm terrified when my children get ill or when I get cancer symptoms (or some other mortal disease) and think of dying before my children are old enough to cope with the unsuitable step-mother. I've always imagined it is just a hangover from the time when I was (or wasn't?) comforted at my mother's breast. I over eat because it bolsters me up and it seems I need bolstering all the time. I get fat with fear.

Yours,
Ellen Fox,
Northampton

Solace and Sedative

★ Dear *Spare Rib*,

Your article on compulsive eating is interesting and thought provoking but it contains no adequate description of my own case which must be quite common among women. All my life I have enjoyed food but I eat for one reason only — comfort. Food acts as a tonic, a stimulant but most of all, as an effective agreeable sedative.

I am a furiously hard worker, reasonably successful professionally, but also neurotic, or feel the ills to which human flesh is heir too keenly. I easily become worried, anxious, dispirited or lonely. Food is a solace. Deprived of sex or separated from my lover I turn to the Mars Bar. After particularly successful sexual intercourse, I celebrate with a Toblerone.

Until my first pregnancy I was thin but then my metabolism changed dramatically and I put on about 56lbs. And the older I get the more occasions seem to demand a bitter mint.

In sisterhood,
Moira Lewis,
Tring

A Woman's Right to Work

Dear *Spare Rib*,

As one of the women involved in the pamphlet and campaign around the slogan "A Woman's Right to Work" I would like to comment on Anny Brackx's article in *Spare Rib* 52.

There is nothing complicated about either the slogan or our struggle around it. The pamphlet was written by students at various teacher training colleges during the occupations last summer. It was written in response to the fact that although women formed the majority of student teachers and were leading the campaign, women's demands were not being taken up. We were meeting arguments such as Willie Hamilton's, that married women should give up their teaching jobs and give them to unemployed male college-leavers, and such as the normal trade union response that "all this teacher unemployment is such a shame — especially for you blokes". In other words, we were being told one way or another that our place is in the home and we do not need jobs.

In demanding "A Woman's Right to Work" we are not ignoring either housework or the gross exploitation of women workers outside the home. Our pamphlet argues that until demands for taking the burden of housework away from individual women are taken up — e.g. nurseries, public communal laundries — there can be no question of equality for women workers. It is not that we like working for an employer: but our oppression as women in this society, and the present attacks on abortion rights, social services for women, etc., come from the fact that a woman's place in capitalist society is in the home. "A Woman's Right to Work" begins to get to the root of the problem; "Wages for Housework" does not.

Few of the women involved in the campaign are members of left groups, but we feel strongly that the organised left must be forced to take seriously women's demands, and contribute to their development. The main difference between IS (International Socialists) and IMG (International Marxist Group)

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from our point of view is that IS does not support the autonomous organisation of women, but the IMG does. This means that they will support such things as women's banners on demonstrations, whereas the IS will consider them divisive. However, no left group is very advanced in its understanding of women's oppression. For this reason I agree completely with Anny Brackx that our oppression will not automatically end when capitalism does. There is absolutely no guarantee except our own organisation, and our determination to make our demands a central part of the whole class struggle.
In sisterhood,
Celia Holt,
London N17

Horrific Story

Dear *Spare Rib*,
On Saturday November 20th there was a picket at Heathrow Airport Immigration Office against the racist officials who detained a pregnant Asian woman, kept her overnight without food and a doctor. They laughed when she screamed in pain and only called an ambulance when the baby's head was emerging. Subsequently the baby died. Her husband was present and they kept insisting, "How can you prove it is your wife, how do you know it is your baby?"

This horrific story is a blatant example of the double oppression suffered by Asian women both as immigrant and as woman.

I was surprised that there weren't more women at the picket and would have liked to have seen more women's groups represented.
J. Wilson,
London W14

Women's Community Press

★ Dear *Spare Rib*,
I was interested and pleased to read that Moss Side Press is still printing and run by women, but I'd like to say that they are not the only press worked by women. Linda and I set up the Notting Hill Press in 1969. There was no political non-profit making local press we know of to help us: we had to learn to draw up leases; form a company; buy machines (we'd never even seen any before); find suppliers, and mechanics. We had some difficulty in being taken seriously as women, at first, but we had great friends and supporters in the area who helped and advised us. We worked out a structure that meant the machines were owned by local groups who nominated representatives to run the Press with us and we were then accountable to the community. Notting Hill at that time had a large and powerful forum in the Peoples Association and we felt part of that street network.

In 1972 we passed on the press to Vicky and Carolla who ran it as Crest Press — a workers' cooperative. They were replaced by Yvonne and Senta who moved the machines to 45 Kensington Park Road where it's now running as CAC Press.

Other women and men have been trained and some have worked alongside for short periods, many have started presses elsewhere, including Helen and Nick who set up Moss Side. So you're not on your own, Moss Side Women, do get in touch if you are in London. CAC Press workers are doing the same sort of work and have the same sort of problems.
Best of luck,
Beryl Foster,
London W6

High Table Talk

★ Dear *Spare Rib*,
Recently I was taken to eat at High Table at one of Cambridge's less antique women's colleges. In the discussion over coffee afterwards, the Fellows and their guests were talking about an attempt made to downgrade a job after it had been awarded to a woman. A Fellow remarked that it might be politically a good move to employ women. "And the insane and homosexuals," added another Fellow.
Yours sincerely,
C.M. Donald,
Cambridge

Wages for Guilt

★ Dear *Spare Rib*,
I'm glad to see from Gerrie Ellis' letter in *Spare Rib* 52 that I'm not the only woman who finds wages for housework hard to swallow. What would one be paid for? For keeping the place spotless and Cordon Bleu meals served punctually to the minute? For doing just enough to keep the house habitable and avert starvation?

I think I should find it simply a double burden of guilt, because I come from a Scottish middle-class background where cleanliness and tidiness were considered not only desirable but necessary. I already feel guilty that I'm not as good a housekeeper as my mother. It would be dreadful to be paid for it as well. I should feel I was getting my money under false pretences.

And if wages for housework, why not for gardening or cleaning the car? If my husband helps me should I split the proceeds with him?

It is horrible to think that for so many women self-esteem is measured in money, especially as there is so little chance that they will get it. If the government can stall the Child Benefit scheme, with the excuse that the working man will find it unacceptable — although the true reasons are financial — who can believe that they will be willing to make yet another deduction to pay wages for housework.

If I ever get any, I shall use it to pay a cleaning lady. Meanwhile, I shall do just as little housework as possible.
Yours sincerely,
Kathleen Lyle,
Sheffield

Wages for Power

★ Dear *Spare Rib*,
As a member of Wages for Housework I would like to remind Gerrie Ellis that however "liberated" women might be, we still have the natural functions of bearing and feeding children. These are not often the intellectual and rewarding tasks they are usually said to be, but a great deal of housework. However interesting our outside jobs, however pleasant our social life — we still have a first job waiting for us at home. Childcare facilities are inadequate and expensive and even if they were well organised we would still have to take care of sick children as they are not usually accepted in nurseries.

By no means are we supporting the capitalist system: we are fighting capital at its very roots, by refusing to be its free labour force, its first industry. Neither are we supporting the nuclear family whose very existence is based on the free labour of women in it. By demanding a wage for all women, we are fighting for the power of women. Why is the word "power" always associated with danger and threat? Because women never have had any power, they have always considered it a negative concept. We are the ones who have always suffered from it — for centuries power has meant for us no pleasure, no rights, no identity. When we say that money is power, we mean the power to be human beings in our right, independent from a father, husband or any partner. We mean the power to control our fertility, our sexuality, the power to do less work for a higher wage like any other worker. We need power in order not to be controlled and manipulated. Is this power a threat? Yes, but only to the capitalist system.
Yours sincerely,
Michele Thomas,
Cambridge

Remember the Committed

★ Dear *Spare Rib*,
Eighteen months ago I bought my first *Spare Rib*, purely because the title intrigued me. I was absolutely amazed by its contents and it was that *Spare Rib* that introduced me to the women's movement and spurred me to go on.

Now when I buy my copy it is done more out of duty than anything else and I read it because I bought it. Very few of the articles spur me to do anything or really set me thinking — except for the one on 'Babysitting' in issue 51. The only answer I can provide for this lack of inspiring material is that you are trying to reach a wider scope of readers but please think of us committed ones as well, who really aren't interested in Fashion through the centuries. Several people have commented how *Spare Rib* is becoming similar to *Woman's Own*.

I'm sorry to have to write like this because all in all the magazine is a very important one, but I don't want it to lose its uniqueness.
Love and sisterhood,
Jo Lacy Smith,
Bath, Avon

Unite All Women

★ Dear *Spare Rib*,
While I applaud your excellent articles, correcting sexual stereotypes, teaching self-determination and independence of women, perhaps it would be valuable if you re-examined some of the implications underlying the magazine. The overtones one gets from the articles have a politically radical tinge. While I agree that the women's movement is political (in the broadest sense of the term) in its implications, I think that the socialist objectives which abound in the magazine could possibly alienate many women.

I have witnessed in action the dangers of linking of political groups with the women's movement. In one women's group I was in, the socialist women split away because they said they had nothing in common with other women who were not socialist. Surely we should be trying to unite all women of whatever class, colour or political opinion, working for women's demands together.
Yours in sisterhood,
Renata Brieger,
Birmingham

★ *indicates letters that have been cut for reasons of space*

6 Spare Rib

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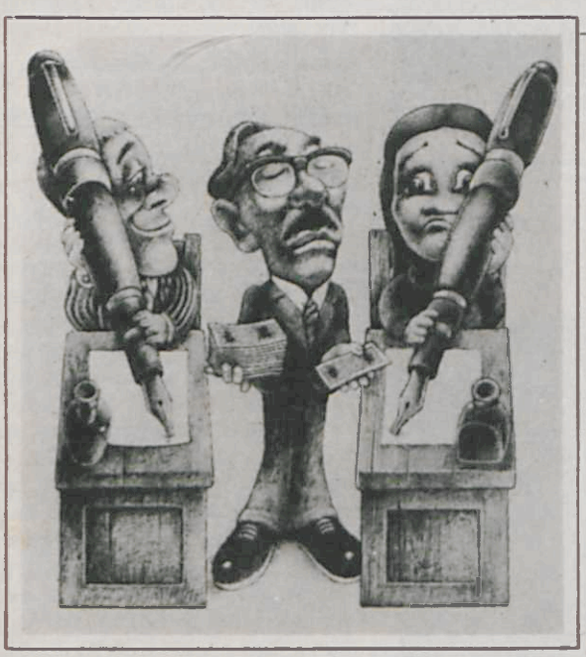
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"THE VIRGIN MARY IN ME TRIUMPHED AS I DREAMED OF THE MOST GLAMOROUS CELESTIAL WEDDING EVER . . ."

Hung Up On The Crucifix

MICHELE ROBERTS EXPLORES THE EFFECTS OF HER CATHOLIC GIRLHOOD

My mother was a Catholic, my father a Protestant; so my mother had a duty to make sure that her children were given a really sound grounding in her religion, the only true faith. I went to a convent school at eleven and left at eighteen. One of its main functions was to teach us to need and accept authority. The Word of God was the law we lived by, freely adapted by the nuns who ran the school to cover anything they did or didn't want us to do. Rational discussion and criticism of this law was forbidden, for it was outside and above fallible human society.

The nuns took three vows at profession: poverty, chastity and obedience. They tried very hard to inculcate at least the latter two virtues in us. Obedience boiled down to a completely uncritical acceptance of whatever we were told. Jesus had said Suffer little children to come unto me; accordingly we not so little children had to suffer the denial of ourselves as independent and rational beings, in order to plod towards heaven and eternal childishness. We were supposed to eat the ants that cropped up in the salad, offering it as a sacrifice to help the holy souls in purgatory get to heaven. We had to keep long, frequent silences; to own up if we broke them and accept a public and humiliating punishment. The nuns lived an even sterner discipline, needing permission from Sister Superior for the tiniest act not already sanctioned in the rule book.

HELL WAS A CONTINUOUS TERROR

So I grew up accepting everything I was told as eternal truth, with no way of distinguishing fact from fantasy, no capacity for understanding differing relations to fact. For me, thinking was intertwined with morality: those in power told you what was right and wrong, you didn't need to work it out for yourself and you weren't supposed to. The Bible was the word of God which meant that every word of it was true — the nuns did not go in for the sophisticated exegesis beloved of the more intellectual orders who have to keep their highly educated members happy. Yet the Old Testament was considered too risqué for our delicate feminine sensibilities; we learnt from heavily bowdlerized books of Bible stories and the nuns' own versions. We swallowed all their apocryphal stories: your guardian angel walked always just behind your right shoulder; a statue of St Anthony placed under the goal-post would help our side to win at netball; sprinkling the bed at night with holy water kept the devil away.

We were supposed to accept these mangled divine dictates on faith alone.

However, this precious gift was precarious, and backsliders needed to be encouraged by the threat of punishment after death — eternal damnation was reserved for the worst offenders. The cathechism, which we had to be able to parrot, went into the different sorts of sins at great length. I wasted enormous amounts of energy agonizing over whether my much loved Protestant grandfather had gone to hell after his death, or, hopefully, to purgatory — only then could my prayers and acts of mortification on his behalf be of any use to him; whether my elder brother, who had died aged three days, had been baptized and so at least achieved limbo as a holy innocent; whether, if a lorry were to run me over suddenly, I was in a state of mortal sin with no time to get forgiveness first and avoid going to hell.

In those days hell was a real and continuous terror. The only way out was through confession. Every Saturday night for ten years I told the parish priest that I was disobedient to my parents and quarrelled with my sisters and brother; each time he told me to be a good girl and to say three Hail Marys as penance.

I CONCENTRATED ON GOD THE SON

The original sin was disobedience and intellectual curiousity, and it had been committed by a woman, Eve. But God had decided to forgive us, providing us with a new and perfect model of femininity, the Virgin Mary. When I tried to obey God's injunction to love him, I had only this model to copy in order to express my need to love and be loved. To expiate the Eve in me, my desire for pleasure had to be reversed: priggish penances to wipe out my sins included long hours on my knees in church deliberately not using a kneeler; eating foods I hated; sitting upright without touching the back of the chair; rushing to be first to do the washing up.

I ended up with no sense of other people's reality; I related only to God. But the need for a love object remained; the only way I could see of achieving one was to accept the inevitable and decide to become a nun. I coped with the punitive God the Father I was ordered to love by concentrating on the Son, who after all had become human and had women friends. Moony raptures at communion as I swallowed his flesh and blood, no mere symbol for us but the real thing. Sex and food were intertwined; my hunger to love became the desire to incorporate what was desired. I was always frustrated; my hunger was never assuaged because you could only receive communion once a day. The Virgin Mary in me triumphed as I dreamt of the most glamorous celestial wedding ever, a death to the corrupt world of human sexuality, a marriage with the denial of the self: chastity to ensure a good seat in heaven; life as a Carmelite nun who would expiate the sin of her existence by taking a vow of silence, never speaking as her own subject again.

I ended up profoundly moral and profoundly masochistic, all my anger turned in upon myself. For years after I stopped going to Mass, I couldn't take responsibility for my actions; if I caused a friend to feel angry or hurt, I was terrified, and apologized profusely, expecting her to love me again immediately. The disciplinary threat of losing God's love carried over into all human relationships.

Other girls coped with the convent regime in less extreme and more outspoken ways. Perhaps because my home was also full of prohibitions (we had to stay in at night to do homework, weren't allowed to go out with boys, didn't get pocket money), I felt I had to live the ones laid down at school. I had no visible alternative; the rules were all I knew. So I pretended not to see the erosions of the ideal taking place all around me: the giggling and the sexy jokes under the communion veils; the internalization of a cruel law that gave us pleasure as school prefects in punishing those less powerful, a chance to punish as we had been punished.

I was forced to notice the bitching between the nuns since it had repercussions on us. Many of them came from poor families in Ireland; their only hope of an education was to join the order and be trained as teachers. I remember them less as a gloriously committed sisterhood than as a group of repressed and unhappy women, taking out their unspoken resentment on each other, and of course on us, in various wounding ways. Yet it was the experience, at eighteen, of being in love with one particularly intelligent, dry, witty nun who afterwards left the convent, that first started me questioning the value of the religious life and of Catholicism.

"I COPED WITH THE PUNITIVE GOD THE FATHER I WAS ORDERED TO LOVE BY CONCENTRATING ON THE SON, WHO AFTER ALL HAD BECOME HUMAN AND HAD HAD WOMAN FRIENDS."



MY MOTHER WEPT LIKE A PIETA

Since we were taught that the origin of our family structure was the triangle of Mary, Jesus and Joseph, we naturally saw the nuclear family as eternally given and unchangeable. People living outside this structure were defying God; we regarded them with a pity which concealed curiosity and fear. Into this group came illegitimate children, blacks, Communists; all had to be prayed for and shunned.

I used the theology of the Holy Family to express my complicated feelings towards my parents. My father, as authority figure, natural head of the family, was God the Father, distant, unconcerned with our upbringing, and feared. At times he also represented God the Son, the tender love-object I desired whenever my loyalty to my mother slipped into hatred and I wanted her out of the way. At other times I adored my mother, I wanted to be her mother and comfort her as she sat on the stairs and cried after a row with my father over how to discipline my brother.

Later explorations of myself in therapy uncovered deep and powerful anger at my mother for the repression she'd subjected me to. This anger found no expression at the time, and turned inwards to become equally powerful as guilt. I felt it was only possible to love my mother at a distance. My feelings for her and for the Virgin Mary became confused in my mind. I built May altars to the Virgin in the hall at home where my mother sat and wept like a Pieta over her son.

The Pieta became an image for me of the only acceptable form of love for a man: holding a dead one in your lap, with the incest taboo preventing any fleshly desires. It also represented the preference I felt in my family for sons over daughters, and the necessity for women to forget themselves in caring for men as children. Later, at university, when I began to drop away from religion, the Virgin Mary was directly replaced by my mother once more. I blamed her for all the incom-

prehensible things wrong with my life: the battering kindly indifference of the upper class men I aped and fell in love with; my sexual guilt which earned me the label cock-teaser; the gulfs I could not bridge on my own between my images of men as either rapists or Prince Charmings.

BETTER DEAD THAN IN BED

Catholicism expresses in a particularly clear way some of the contradictions that we live as women around our sexuality. It erects two major symbols of womanhood — saint and whore — which define and abuse us in our own and others' eyes. The man Jesus redeemed us from the sin of the half-person Eve, the repository for all the sexuality and strong emotions that male theologians could not bear to accept as part of humanity as a whole. If you're a woman, all you can do is repent. Jesus' favourite woman friend was Mary Magdalene, the repented prostitute whose chief occupation was kneeling at his feet, bathing them with the oil and tears of shame. For although on paper Catholic theology promises women equality with men before God, it hints that women have smaller souls, that they need greater restraint and care if they are to achieve heaven. The impossible ideal woman is Mary, who combines motherhood and virginity.

The message we received at the convent was Better dead than in bed. The nuns' favourite saint was Maria Goretti, a young Italian girl who, in 1902, was stabbed to death rather than commit the deadly sin of premarital sex. She was quickly canonized by the pope as a shining example to modern girls, whose heads were being turned by the immorality they encountered not only in the cinema but also in the world of work, whither increasing numbers of women were being forced by economic hardship. The Church's main response to its female members' poverty at this time was to mourn the fact that work outside the home might blunt women's exemplary sanctity as good wives and mothers.

As a good little Catholic girl myself, I was mystified about how my body worked, and unaware that I had a clitoris and vagina. I saw as reasonable male fears and distrust of my body and my desires for sex. I saw myself as whore and vampire. I didn't yet realise that you could be angry with people who didn't give you what you wanted. Frightened of further attempts to express desire, I accepted the assertion that I led men on to seduce or rape me. One couldn't possibly choose to have sex; but neither could one express anger if men chose to force one.



"JESUS HAD SAID SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME; ACCORDINGLY WE NOT SO LITTLE CHILDREN HAD TO SUFFER THE DENIAL OF OURSELVES AS INDEPENDENT AND RATIONAL BEINGS, IN ORDER TO PLOD TOWARDS HEAVEN AND ETERNAL CHILDISHNESS . . ."

For a long time, my choice of male lover expressed my feelings about God and my father: the powerful man, who was allowed to be everything that I was not. The God of our fathers was indeed a jealous god: we could have no other lover but him.

OUR MISSION WAS TO INSPIRE MEN

On the other hand, the nuns taught us that our mission in life was to inspire men and rescue them from their bestial selves. Strangely enough, as soon as we became wives and mothers, we walked in a shining sentimental aura. And while we inspired them, men would guide and advise us — by practising self denial we reached heaven through them. Behind every great male saint is a silent saintly mother.

A good Catholic girlhood prepares you for a lifetime of accepting the status quo, the only alternative to your youthful idealism being cynicism and perhaps a deathbed reconversion. Catholicism has always acted as the ideological grease for repressive state machinery. The imperialist countries thrive on the labour of the immigrants from the countries they have pillaged. Now immigrant women work at our dirtiest, most isolating and ill paid jobs and Catholicism helps keep them in their place. Their religion blames them for their poverty, for leaving their families to find work abroad, and denies them autonomy along with birth control and abortion. Those women who have to travel to England for an abortion pay an appalling price; apart from the money, there's the mental anguish of the belief that abortion is murder, and the risk of permanent injury from back-street abortions.

At the same time, Catholicism provides a structure of public and private ritual to remind you of the one in your home country, to give you a sense of place and comfort which as an exile you badly need. And a lifetime of listening to the priest and paying him more than tithes, your whole social fabric threaded with religious beliefs and rituals, makes it hard to criticise your exhausting life. The word of God and the priest may be further reinforced by the husband you are dependent on. And Catholicism has its own mystifying justification that turns hardship into martyrdom: suffering born with resignation in this life guarantees a good time in the next.

I STILL NEED MARTYRS

Even though you've rejected Catholicism, its attitudes remain, insidiously shaping the way you view yourself and the world. I am still profoundly idealistic, setting myself high immediate goals of personal and political achievement, and then feeling guilty when I fail, as I inevitably do. Sometimes I forget that I am starting from where I am now, as a person living out the particular distortions of life under capitalism, and that as an oppressed woman I am not automatically glorious. Sometimes I still need martyrs and guerilla saints and I struggle to place other women on pedestals, a celebration of suffering, a worship of strength seen as individually rather than collectively inspired. Sometimes I still receive ideas as though they were papal decrees, not to be thought about and questioned. Sometimes, because of my need for a God-given dictate on which analysis, which group, is correct, I want to withdraw from the difficulties of being involved politically.

Catholicism is the philosophy of oppressive illusions. In his book *The German Ideology* Marx shows how a belief in God prevents us from understanding that it is we, as human beings interacting with the historical process, who can push for change: "The call to abandon their illusions is the call to abandon a condition which requires illusions." We demand, as feminists, to live, not in some future eternity after death, but now.□

Notes

Since this article was written two books have been published on the Virgin:
Alone Of Her Sex *by Marina Warner published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson (reviewed in this issue);*
The Virgin *by Geoffrey Ashe published by Routledge.*



Cartoon of 'Brighton Belles in the 1820s'. Not so different from now?

WOMEN'S LIBERATION GROUPS AND ACTIVITIES

There's a combined group for all Brighton, 200 women subscribe to the newsletter. Regular general meetings are held, at present at the Marlborough Hotel (a popular venue with the National Front). Women go and talk to other groups — students from Lewes Technical College, Labour Party Young Socialists, the National Housewives Register, and on local radio. And they run a bookstall at the university on Tuesday lunchtimes. But their activities are severely hampered by being centreless. Contact them c/o 5 Leucroft Road, or telephone 27612.

- *Women's Refuge:* A founder member of the National Women's Aid Federation. Has an open door policy. Brighton 506325
- *WRAG:* Women's Rights Action Group. So far mainly monitoring local tribunal cases. Brings out newsletter. Looking into current threats to women's employment. Contact Gina, 737791
- *Women and Science:* Concerned with women's lack of involvement in science and technology, and the way science is used to mystify and oppress women in their daily lives. Doing research into sex differences, sexuality, and mental illness. Run the widely attended first year sex differences course at the University. Currently working on a visual aids kit to use in secondary schools. Contact Linda at 15 Camelford Street, Kemptown. Brighton 682475
- *Women and Health:* Self examination, self help, alternative medicine. Contact Lyn 692568, 107 Queen's Park Road.
- *National Abortion Campaign:* Sally, 57a Preston St, Brighton.
- *Consciousness Raising:* Joan Nolan, 730827
- *Women's Study Groups:* Annie Muir, 686363
- *University Women's Group:* Campaigning for the university to take responsibility for creche and nursery facilities on campus. Runs mixed (open to men) study groups, on romance, women and — literature, psychiatry, education. Starting a creative writing group, linked with the Literary Society.
- *The Poly Etc:* No women's group at the moment, but an active campaign for a creche, and a playgroup's being set up at the College of Ed. Contact Tessa Burrows, 683585 for the Art College, Jane Sa 62990 for the College of Ed. The Union Office at any site.
- *Graphics/Posters:* Pen Dalton, 31 Park St., Brighton 685431. Sandy, Flat 1, Basement, 14 Powis Square, Brighton 27045.

WAM — THE WORKING ASSOCIATION FOR MOTHERS

A practical self-help organization that helps to break down the isolation of mothers with small children. It now has 500 members from Brighton to Worthing (similar groups in Lewes and Bognor Regis). Babysitting is the chief exchange activity, but coffee mornings, firework parties, a shopping creche and everything from technical drawing, dancing partners, basket-work to typing, hairdressing (and tax advice from husbands) are also offered.

Last summer WAM ran a successful playscheme for working and single mothers for five weeks during the holidays, using the facilities and swimming pool at Coldean school. To raise money to do the same again they plan to produce a booklet on living in Brighton as a mother of under 5's. To find out more contact Linda Kinsella, 37 Millcroft, Brighton 55134.

BRIGHTON LESBIAN GROUP

Primarily a social group — summer beach party, walks on the downs, also fortnightly meetings A monthly women's disco is held at the Stanford Arms, Preston Circus: "The landlady was curious at first, she kept poking her head round the door to see what was going on." Next one on December 29th. The disco, which is on tape and full of good dancing music, is now available for hire for women's parties, from Judy Coutinho, c/o University Union. (It does, surprisingly, include "Under My Thumb" sung by a woman.)

They're organizing the next national lesbian conference, which will probably be around Easter 1977. A jumble sale's already planned to raise money, but a lot of other help is needed. Contact Ruth, 28 Buckingham Street. Otherwise contact the group through Gay Switchboard.

WOMEN'S CENTRE

After intense discussions over what kind of centre it was to be (whether men should help out with the playgroup, take part in National Childbirth classes), a shortlife property in the centre of town was extracted from the Council and given an annual grant of £200 by Social Services. The "diary" gives a detailed record: nearly 2,000 women came for comfort and support, for help with social services, for meetings, to the playgroup, to use the pregnancy testing services, or just to find out what was going on and meet people. The Centre was one of the few places where menopausal women, told by their doctors "you're too old to be pregnant" could find out if they were.

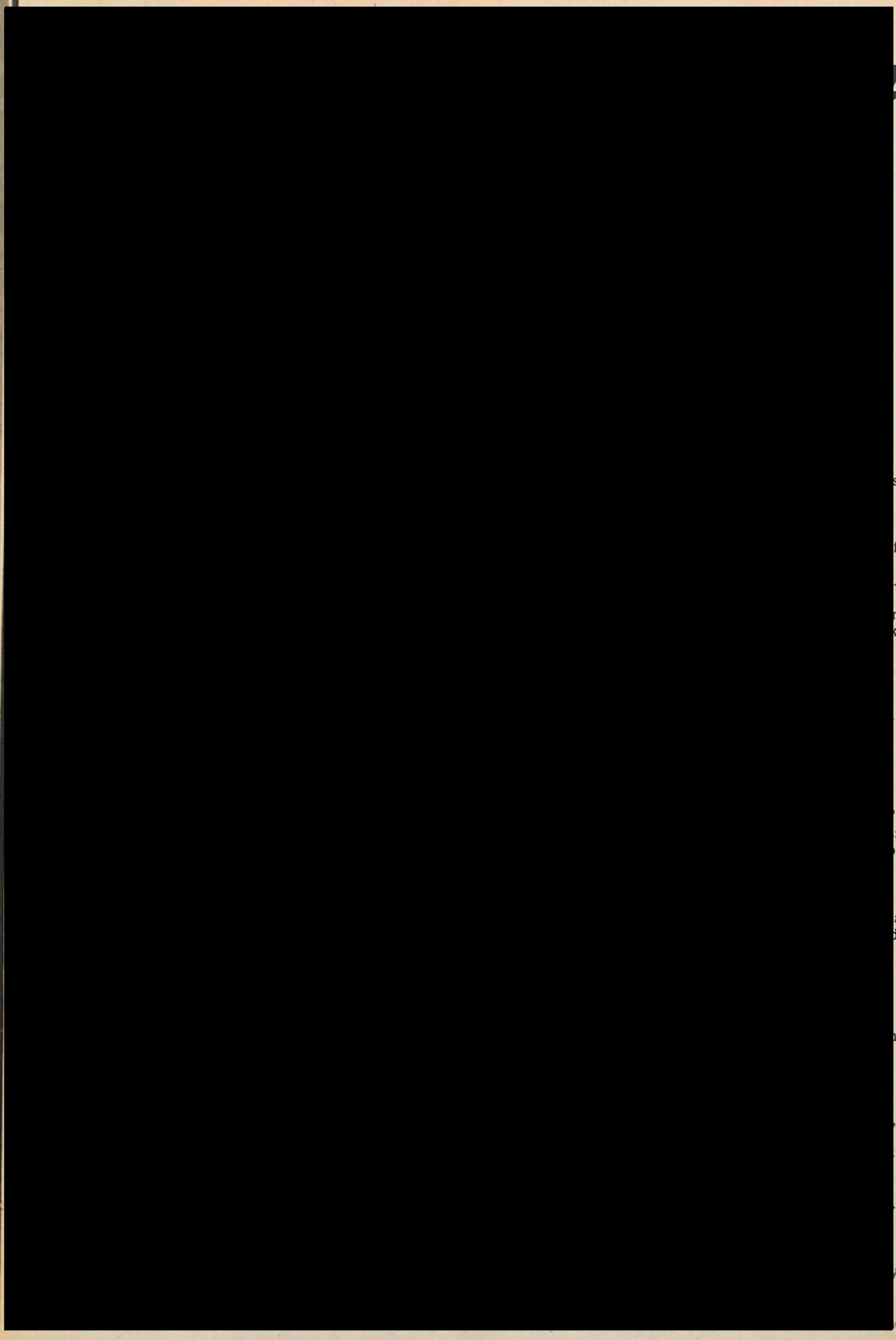
But in June the building was demolished. Now plans for health and therapy classes, a lending library, language tuition for foreign hotel workers, communal meals, haven't a chance of materialising. They need permanent premises with a minimum of two rooms, a toilet, running water and a telephone. At the moment they are camping weekdays 10am—6pm and Wednesday evening till 8.30pm at the Resources Centre, Presbyterian Church Hall, North Road, with the playgroup downstairs on weekday mornings and a Mothers and Toddlers club on Tuesday afternoons. Contact them either at 5 Leucroft Road, Moulescoomb or by phoning 27612.

USEFUL CONTACTS

- *Gay Switchboard:* Brighton 27878. 8—10pm every day.
- *FPA:* 18—19 Western Road, Brighton 734258
- *BPAS:* Wistons, 138 Dyke Road, Brighton 509726
- *VD Clinic:* Royal Sussex County Hospital, Eastern Rd. Efficient treatment but run by moralistic doctors who make clear their disapproval of non-marital sex.
- *National Childbirth Trust:* Dorothy Wainwright, 106 Western Rd, Brighton 6349
- *Natural Birth Control:* Meredy Benson, Brighton 28357, c/o Public House Bookshop, see below.
- *Meditation and Yoga:* Friends of the Western Buddhist Order run classes for women and are planning to set up a women's centre with craft workshops as well. Contact them at their healthfood restaurant, Sunrise, 16 North Rd, Brighton 63188
- *Squatters Union:* 61 Elm Grove
- *Gingerbread:* 774087
- *Agoraphobics Group:* Linda 682428. Meetings at 67 Centre, off Hodshrove Rd, Moulescoomb
- *Adventure Playground:* Moulescoomb c/o 67 Centre
- *The Olive Branch:* Bedford St. A friendly pub with a good juke box.
- *Men Against Sexism:* Still surviving in Brighton. Doing a sex education leaflet for schools and compiling a men's health handbook. More men are needed to help with the babysitting rota. Contact Tony/Barry 694537 or Ian 680654 or send contributions to the newsletter to 211 Queen's Park Road.

PUBLICATIONS & BOOKSHOPS

- *Brighton Voice:* The alternative newspaper. Good on housing, local squats, police harrassment, though not particularly strong on women's issues. 10p monthly. c/o Open Cafe, 7 Victoria Road, Brighton.
- *QueenSpark:* Local community paper. Fought a successful campaign to get the old Royal Spa used for a nursery school, not a casino. Contact 18 Windmill St.
- *Live Wire:* Quarterly newssheet produced collectively by women in Lewes and funded by Social Services. Free. A mixture of local material and general information with cartoons. So far on 'Life with the Under 5's', 'Our Health', out soon 'Women and Work in Lewes'. Contact Anne Yarrow, 4 Castle Banks, Lewes 6291
- *Symposium:* Just moved to new premises in Gardner St. Expanding their women's book section with pamphlets and imports.
- *Public House Bookshop:* 21 Little Preston St, Brighton.



Exploring Sex Differences

edited by **Barbara Lloyd** and **John Archer**

November 1976, xii+280pp., £5.00/$ 11.00 0.12.453550.X

Traditional notions of sex roles and sex differences have come under close scrutiny in recent years following the challenge from the Women's Movement. Popular interest in these matters has acted as a catalyst for a more rigorous and scientific investigation into the bases of such distinctions. However, academic research on sex differences cannot be value-free and the current volume begins with a discussion of this problem: what is studied, by what methods and how the results are reported. The evidence of sex differences is then examined by experts from a variety of disciplines. All contributions have a common theme, the need to consider social, biological and psychological variables together in any attempt to interpret differences in behaviour. This interdisciplinary, interactionist approach to a wide range of problems stemming from biology and anthropology as well as psychology makes this book an ideal foundation for students and general readers who want a balanced and analytical treatment of the evidence and the problems in this highly topical area.

Academic Press
London New York San Francisco
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24-28 Oval Road, London NW1, England
111 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10003, USA

Joan

In 1976 Joan Armatrading achieved the success which has long been overdue, as it was back in 1972 that she released her debut album "Whatever's for us".

It was acclaimed as one of the albums of that year, but was not the enormous hit that it deserved to be. Now that album is available again. Its 14 imaginative and evocative songs make up an LP that was undoubtedly ahead of it's time — one that nobody who has just discovered Joan's exciting talent can afford to be without.



Tracks:

MY FAMILY
CITY GIRL
SPEND A LITTLE TIME
WHATEVER'S FOR US, FOR US
CHILD STAR
VISIONARY MOUNTAINS
IT COULD HAVE BEEN BETTER
HEAD OF THE TABLE
MISTER REMEMBER ME
GAVE IT A TRY
ALICE
CONVERSATION
MEAN OLD MAN
ALL THE KING'S GARDENS

Personnel:

GERRY CONWAY/
HENRY SPINETTI Drums
RAY COOPER Percussion
LARRY STEELE Bass Guitar
DAVY JOHNSTONE Guitar
JOAN ARMATRADING Guitar/Vocals



Marketed by DECCA

NEWS



BUT NOT IN THE OFFICE

Louise Boychuk's employers, city stockbrokers HJ Symons Holdings, sacked her for wearing a 'Lesbians Ignite' badge in the office. She started proceedings against them for unfair dismissal. Anny Brackx *explains what happened in court.*

The industrial tribunal hearing featured a dessicated panel chairman, who fancied himself as God's judicial administrator: a triple-chinned stockbroker, who consulted a dictionary to find out what a lesbian is; two lawyers in honourable opposition; a roomful of lesbian supporters, badges all over; and Louise, who in vain tried to hammer through to the panel that wearing a lesbian badge was a principled stand confirming her identity.

The tone was set from the beginning: "Might there have been young girls, aged 16, just out of school, working with Miss Boychuk?" The defence avidly confirmed the chairman's suspicions.

It was easy, in this atmosphere of moral indignation, for the defence to put their case: to request Miss Boychuk to take off her badge was reasonable as she was "displaying a wording at our place of business which is distasteful to others and which could be injurious to our best interests if observed by our clients, whose goodwill results in the earning of large amounts of overseas currencies beneficial to our country". (Could it be true that lesbianism is tearing down British capitalism?)

Also the fleshy stockbroker didn't want to be "the laughing stock of the Arab world". Lending him a hand, in old boys style, the chairman added that "any firm is allowed to protect its reputation".

"Miss Boychuk took no notice of the request," the defence continued, and kept wearing her badge, even after being warned that she risked her job. As "reasonable order" had to be maintained in a firm, it was not unfair, under those circumstances, to dismiss Miss Boychuk, the lawyer claimed.

Soon it transpired that Louise hardly ever saw any of the "overseas currencies" carriers, that nobody in the firm had ever before taken offence at her wearing gay badges, and that there were no complaints about the quality of her work. The whole defence was built on speculation, and when questioned on this the stockbroker had to admit he had expressed "an opinion".

He also expressed his opinion on the subject of lesbianism; it is perverted, as confirmed by the dictionary. To leave no doubt about his own 'normality' he said he would not like to sit near a homosexual, while claiming in the same breath that he didn't dismiss Louise because of his prejudice against lesbians.

But prejudice is not the only reason for objecting to gayness, according to the chairman, who before had mumbled that the word gay had been perverted. Referring to Genesis, he informed Louise that the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gommorah. Fortunately her lawyer pointed out that this went beyond the prerogative of a tribunal and that in fact lesbianism is not illegal in this country.

Louise patiently carried on with her endeavours to explain that she wore gay badges as a symbol, so that people would not assume she was heterosexual and to show "a real person behind the fearful word lesbian". But in no way did the chairman see a real person: "Aren't you really trying to encourage people to become lesbians; bringing other women into the cult?"

At this the audience gave him to understand that he should be practising in a sty, not a court.

Summing up, Louise's lawyer said that sacking somebody because she is openly a lesbian is as unfair as dismissing Jewish employees because of Arab boycotts.

The panel reserved judgement to a later date.□

Lesbian Mother Wins Custody

Three Appeal judges have given custody of 11-year-old girl twins to their mother who is a lesbian. Although the judges bent over backwards to dissociate themselves from making any judgement "for or against homosexual parents" this case is a breakthrough.

This is the first time the courts have not taken the view that homosexuality automatically disqualifies a mother from caring for her children (see *SR* issue 50). But this was a limited victory based mainly on the father's inability to give the children an immediate home. The judges made it clear that they were most reluctant to award custody to a lesbian who was "obsessively involved in herself and the feminist cause"; they even tried to solve the father's accommodation problem by suggesting bunk beds! So the decision boiled down to leaving the girls with their mother rather than taking them into care.

One important precedent was set: the husband had asked for "the right to vet the guest list" of his ex-wife so that the children would not be corrupted (or molested) by her gay friends. The judge, while fully sympathising with his anxiety, said that he could only "leave it to the mother's good sense not to conduct her personal life in a way that would impinge upon the children". But as she *was* a lesbian, restrictions could only be enforced by taking the children away from her, which he did not want to do. Here, at least, the court acknowledged that it could not control this area of people's lives.□

RISKING GOSSIP & DISGRACE – Asian women strike



JOHN STURROCK (REPORT)

"This is not so much a strike about pay, it is a strike about human dignity," said Jayaben Desai, Strike Committee Treasurer, about the walk-out of 200 workers at the Chapter Road and Cobbold Road factories of Grunwick Film Processing Laboratories, Willesden, North West London. They have been out since August 23.

The firm, which operates under the names of "Bonus-pool" and "Truecolour" has a workforce which is over 80% East African Asian, and mostly women. The conditions of employment are more akin to 19th century than present day England. The workers, who get £25 for a 35 hour week, are forbidden to join a union; those who tried to do so were sacked.

Overtime is compulsory. One woman who had been with the firm since it opened seven years ago was given her cards when she pleaded that overtime was impossible on just one occasion because of her small baby. Voicing the smallest grievance is met with the threat of the sack. Pregnant women are told to arrange visits to the clinic over the weekend. When a pregnant woman complained of back-ache during overtime, the supervisor laughed at her: "I can stand all day long, why can't you?" A woman is automatically sacked when having a baby and told to re-apply for work. This means that she has to start again at the minimum rate of pay for untrained workers.

Even going to the toilet is an ordeal: permission has to be sought from the managers or supervisors. There is no rest room or qualified nurse. One employee was sent for First Aid training, but that was hardly useful as bandages and elasto-plast are seldom available when needed.

Humiliation at Home

The fact that the workers, many of them recent immigrants, find it hard to get a job and have never been in a union before makes them an easy target for exploitation. Several Asian women have said that the management, and particularly one of the Directors, who is an Anglo-Indian, are astute in their understanding of how to manipulate and humiliate them.

For example he said to a girl's fellow workers when she walked out — "Oh, she's only gone on strike because her boyfriend's on the picket line." In fact she didn't have a boyfriend, but he said this knowing it would get to her father, who might not only stop her picketing, but forbid her ever to go out to work again. It would also act as a deterrent for the other young women, as the same kind of rumour could be spread about them should they decide to strike. Invariably rebukes take place in front of other workers, and there are often threats to disgrace them in their community.

It takes a great deal of guts for an Asian woman to come out on strike and stand on a picket line in the full glare of publicity day after day. All sorts of psychological pressures are brought to bear on her. Members of her family may gossip and deprecate her, as it is considered a dishonour for a woman to put herself in the public eye.

Even Jayaben Desai, who as a young girl in the 40s took part in India's Independence Movement, experiences this pressure. Her husband recently received a call from a friend who made a remark about seeing her picture in the papers and on TV. She is lucky, however, in having a husband who supports her and says, "Yes, my wife is on strike and stands on a picket line, and we are proud that she is fighting for what is right."

Post Office Support

All the strikers have now joined APEX, which has declared the strike official. APEX is demanding union recognition, the re-instatement of sacked and victimised workers, the right to negotiate on the workers' grievances, pay, conditions and enforced overtime.

On October 29 the Union of Post Office Workers decided to instruct all its members not to handle Grunwick's mail — which hits hard as it's a mail order business. The ban was lifted when the management agreed to negotiate through ACAS. But since then they've played all sorts of dirty tricks to delay the proceedings and are employing scab labour. The National Association of Freedom, whose millionaire chairman is Norris McWhirter, brother of Ross McWhirter assassinated apparently for his ultra-right activities, has asked for a High Court order to stop post office workers blacking the mail. But local post office workers are solidly behind the strikers and say they will black the mail again if the management continues to refuse the strikers' demands.

There is a picket outside the factory gates every working day and the workers remain firm in their conviction — "They won't treat us like cattle any more."□

Ann Rossiter

Support and messages of solidarity to: Grunwick Strike Committee, Brent Trades and Labour Hall, 375 High Road, Willesden, London NW10.

Grunwick strikers hand out copies of the latest strike bulletin at the local tube station



JOHN STURROCK (REPORT)



Queenie Webb, Mary Pelling, Lorraine Webb and Anne Nicholson on the picket line

Cleaning up Asbestos

Asbestos dust can kill. People working with it are required to wear protective clothing. But for three months over the summer the five women cleaning the Holbrook Road Annexe of North East London Polytechnic were unknowingly sweeping up asbestos, writes Sue Sharpe. **As soon as they realised, they refused to continue. Children were due to come into the Child Study Department after the holidays, so the cleaners declared the building a hazard to protect themselves, the children, staff and students. The polytechnic, however, refused to admit there was any danger.**

In early summer a firm contracted to do alterations to comply with fire safety regulations had used asbestolex sheets, which were cut up *inside* the building. The men working on it were unprotected, there were no warning signs, and the area surrounding became covered with white dust. It was hard work for the cleaners to keep it clean, and only in September did they find out that the dust they were sweeping contained asbestos.

Immediately they picketed the building, informing staff and students of the danger. The General and Municipal Workers Union, of which all five were members, made the *picket* official, but not the *strike*, so they were not entitled to any strike pay. They managed to stop people using the building by changing the locks, except for a day nursery within the grounds which they wanted to keep open because local women needed it. For seven weeks they picketed every day. During this time one woman, Lorraine Webb, was sacked on the grounds that she'd been taken on temporarily while another cleaner was sick. But there was nothing about this in her contract; they felt she was being victimised.

Other Cleaners Cool

When the cleaners first complained, a firm was brought in to test air and dust samples. The polytechnic used the relatively low results to deny the danger. But figures can easily mislead — for instance the samples were collected when the dust had long settled and give no idea of the levels when it was being cut or swept. And whatever the results, *no* level of asbestos is safe.

The cleaners felt their union was "dragging its feet and stalling". They got some support from other unions, local factory workers and women's groups, and many people visited the picket line. But as the polytechnic buildings are scattered, it's hard to organise, and the cleaners in other buildings weren't very interested.

When I was at the picket on November 18, the women were determined to fight on. Anne Nicholson showed me their list of demands which included taking further samples, having the place properly vacuumed out, reinstating Lorraine Webb, not using non-unionised labour and getting full pay for their time on strike.

The women had constructed a sturdy shelter by the wall in which they kept warm and made tea. Male trade unionists who visited them, like some dockers, said they never had anything like this.

Longterm Responsibility

But they weren't to use it for much longer. On November 19 the cleaners walked out of a meeting with the director when he refused to see them with their legal advisor. But their union representative stayed and negotiated without them, arranging their return to work. The polytechnic still wouldn't admit that the asbestos had ever been used dangerously, which absolved them from taking responsibility if anyone fell ill as a result.

Angry and upset, the cleaners felt the union had let them down. They had a further meeting with the director on November 24 when they themselves negotiated and succeeded in all but one of their demands — that all polytechnic cleaners should be unionised, a demand the director claimed he was not authorised to implement.

So the polytechnic will have to pay to have the building properly vacuumed out, and has also agreed to set up a register of people who had any contact with the asbestos, as they now admit that there *may* have been a *possibility* of a hazard.

Many people work with dangerous materials without knowing it, or without realising the longterm effects. One of the cleaners, Mary Pelling, had gone into hospital over the summer with symptoms that couldn't be related directly to asbestos, but since she had worked there for 12 years with other materials such as fibreglass which gave the cleaners "fibreglass itch" — who knows the accumulated effects of working in such conditions?□

The "Science for People" Hazards of Work group, who gave a lot of help and support in this dispute, can be contacted at 9 Poland St, London W1 (01-437 2728).

Why do homework?

"Hundreds of thousands of people, mainly women, have little choice but to work in their own homes for outside employers. We are campaigning for conditions that make homework a real choice rather than a forced necessity."

So states the Homeworkers' Charter, drawn up by the London Homeworking Campaign, which held its opening meeting on October 30.

Rather than give "tearful accounts of individuals", the campaign wants to make people aware of the exploitation which companies like Dorothy Perkins and Courtaulds support. They hope to advise homeworkers on the rights they have, and lobby Parliament for changes in the law — for example the Health and Safety at Work and Employment Protection Acts should be extended to cover homeworkers.

The charter demands equal rates of pay to unionised factory workers *plus* overheads (as homeworkers have to buy their own machines). And it demands decent social facilities — if there were better English classes for immigrants, more nurseries and higher state benefits, women wouldn't be pushed into homework jobs that can pay as little as 2p an hour.

Most important, the campaign wants to contact homeworkers and help them get organised. It's well aware of the problems — homeworkers are isolated, open to blackmail from their employers if they are working without cards, and easily disposed of if they make a fuss — but it's determined to work for change at all levels. Though based in London, it hopes local groups will affiliate, and as homeworkers are exploited as women, it hopes women's groups will get involved.□

Jane Root

For copies of the charter, pamphlet of advice or other information, contact the London Homeworking Campaign, 214 Stapleton Hall Road, London N4 (01-735 1024/5035).

NEWS COPY DATES
For *Spare Rib* 55 — Dec 16
For *Spare Rib* 56 — Jan 19
(If it's urgent, it's worth trying after these dates.)

NEWS

Bingo Women Club Together

Fifty women working at Club One Bingo in Coventry walked out on October 22. They were joined the next day by 20 women from the Rialto, another Coventry club also owned by Orr Enterprises, a Coventry-based entertainment chain owning clubs and cinemas in the Midlands and elsewhere.

The women work as cleaners, cashiers, callers, bar and restaurant staff — except for management, it's almost all women working there, mainly part-time. The clubs are open seven days a week, closing only on Christmas day, and one grievance is the lack of overtime pay for weekends and Bank Holidays. Some work absurdly long hours — up to 80 hours a week — to make up their pay, as average earnings are only 50p an hour (raised to 56½p when strike action was in the offing).

Other jobs are hard to come by in Coventry now, and some women work at the clubs when laid off by factories that employ a lot of women, notably GEC. One advantage of this is that some, though not all, have previous experience of trade union organisation and strike action.

Organising in Secret

The women first approached management to discuss unionisation this summer; *no* union was then acceptable. So three women set about clandestinely organising Club One, and later the Rialto — a difficult feat with so many part-time workers doing different jobs, many never seeing each other because their hours are spread over 16 hours a day. Nearly all the women at both clubs joined the Transport and General Workers Union, which is particularly strong in Coventry.

When asked again to recognise the T&GWU, management refused, insisting that the women join NATTKE (National Association of Theatrical, Television and Kine Employees), a small union with membership mainly among cinema projectionists and some theatre staff. So secretly the women started organising strike action for recognition of the T&GWU.

At the end of November management still refuse to meet the T&GWU, and are employing scab labour (Club One closed down completely for the first five days of the strike). They've even tried giving out free tickets and selling drinks half price, as custom has fallen from 6—700 to 70 a session. People get off the bus, see the picket and go to the Mecca over the road instead.

No Deliveries

The T&GWU made the strike official immediately, but at first only paid the women from the hardship fund, though they *thought* they were getting strike pay. When the money stopped coming, ten women went back to work. The rest occupied the local official's office and rang Jack Jones to ask why. Since then they've been getting strike pay, and no-one's gone back.

Other workers are supporting them by refusing to deliver beer, milk and bread to the clubs, and the dustmen won't empty the bins. Local car and engineering factories have given money, and the Polytechnic students have opened their nursery building (closed down through education cuts) to the pickets' children.□

Helen Gurden
Coventry Working Women's Charter Group

It looks like being a long strike — the women are rewriting carols to sing at Christmas! Please send messages of support and donations to: The Strike Committee, 42 Hamilton Rd, Stoke, Coventry.

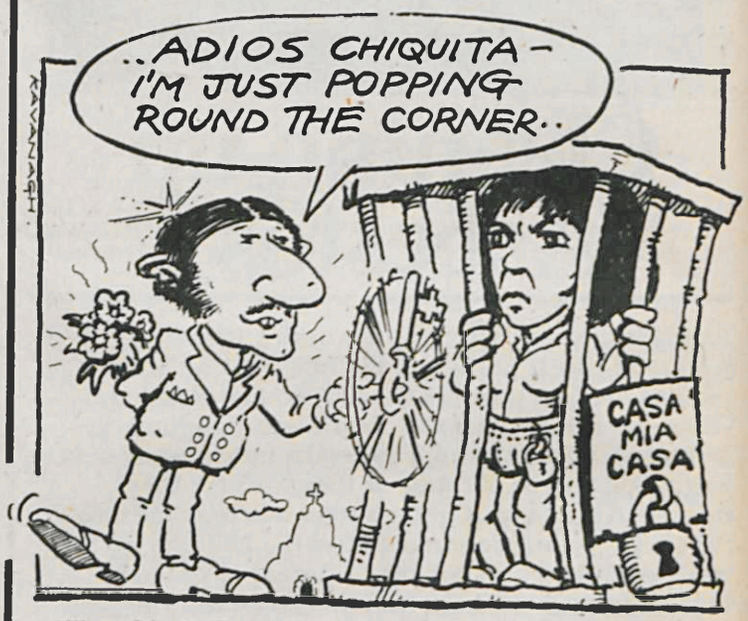
Appeal Against Equality

BEDFORDSHIRE: When women at Electrolux won equal pay at an industrial tribunal, the firm appealed to the Employment Appeals Tribunal (see *SR* 53), which upheld the women's case. The firm now intends to go to the court of appeal — this will be the first appeal against an appeal.□

'You'll pay for this' ADULTERY IN SPAIN

Spanish women can get six years jail and fines of £40,000 for adultery, while the law allows their husbands to do as they please — so long as they don't bring their lovers home.

There have always been cases brought against women, but only recently has the press been free to report them. And only recently has a women's movement been able to meet and organise any opposition.



When Maria Benito's husband accused her of adultery, demanding she be imprisoned for five years and forced to pay him £450 compensation, women started to campaign in her defence and petitioned the Minister of Justice. In October the case was thrown out for lack of evidence — her lawyer commented: "I believe the judges were made to meditate very hard knowing that public opinion was watching them."

Another case around which women are campaigning is that of Angeles Munoz of Barcelona. We received this report:

Angeles, who comes from a peasant family, left her small village in La Mancha 12 years ago, and came to Barcelona where she started working in a plastic factory. In 1969 she got married and in 1970 gave birth to Yolanda. Two months later her husband left her, and she struggled for herself and the baby, working as a cleaner.

In 1973 she started to live with another man. She got pregnant, and before she gave birth to the second child, her legal husband, who had done nothing whatsoever for Yolanda, accused her of adultery. Months after the second child was born, she was recognised in court as its mother, which was proof of adultery. But her husband, not content with this, demanded that Yolanda, now six years old, be put under the care of his parents.

"We are all adulteresses"

On the day she had to hand over her daughter in front of a judge, 300 women were outside the Palace of Justice with placards saying "I am also an adulteress" and chanting "We want free women and free children", "We are not our husbands' property", "Machists you are the real fascists" (machist means male supremacist).

When another woman, also accused of adultery, came out

of court, she was amazed to see so many women calling themselves adulteresses, and joined the picket. After three attempts, the police managed to disperse the crowd.

Inside, Angeles had to explain why she had not brought Yolanda with her to give to the grandparents, who had been ordered to put her in a religious school.

Escaping Arrest

Soon after, on November 13, three plainclothes policemen arrived at her house to take Yolanda away. The mother resisted, with the help of 40 other women. "The mother cried and the child was saying, 'I don't want to go!' " said one of the nieghbours. The police tried several times that morning to take the child — but Angeles and Yolanda escaped to an unknown destination.

By November 18 she was back in Barcelona, taking part in a demonstration of 8,000 which was broken up by riot police. The next day 150 women picketed her parents-in-law's house, then shut themselves in a church in Barcelona. Local people were sympathetic and brought food to them.

On the 20th the police came and took away their placards and banners from outside. The women came out on the 21st and were joined by 1,000 women for a demonstration in solidarity with Angeles and in protest against the general oppression of women.

The next day 800 people picketed the court again when Angeles had to explain why she refused to give up her daughter to the police. So far Angeles and Yolanda are still together.

Divorce or no Marriage?

The different women's groups in Barcelona have some disagreements over their demands — one wants legalised divorce, another says 'Down with Marriage'. But there's a general agreement at times of action.

The moral pressure put on this woman because she has loved someone, though her legal husband has never loved her, shows the horrors of male supremacist laws. Many women have suffered in the same way on their own. But with the solidarity of many thousands of women, Angeles has refused to accept these laws. From now on no woman will be alone when threatened with prison for adultery. Angeles and Yolanda will still be persecuted, but together we will abolish these laws.□



FROM FEMINISTO

Why Bother About Beauty Contests?

Every year, the student women's liberation groups in Birmingham picket the Carnival Queen Beauty Competition, arranged as part of Rag Week. This "entertainment" went forward yet again this year on October 21. Yet again we picketed, writes Cynthia Bower.

As it was held at Barbarella's night club in the town centre, not on campus as usual, more people should have been involved, but in fact fewer turned up. We had planned to take more positive action this time — actually entering the club, getting up on stage and trying to stop the competition. Because of the strict security at a place like Barbarella's, with six foot bouncers, we felt we'd need 50—100 women. As only 30 came, we were reduced to chanting and leafletting as usual.

Strip shows and beauty competitions as a regular feature of Rag Week are particularly frustrating as "sexist events" are officially outlawed by the National Union of Students. But this decision has to be ratified by individual student unions, and although the issue is debated laboriously at least once a year in Birmingham, the union has never followed NUS's lead.

Too Remote to Attack?

In November Miss World affronted us again. Women's liberationists haven't actively disrupted it since 1970, the main reason being our impotence in the face of Mr Morley and Mecca. Demonstrating doesn't stop it, and it is humiliating to protest and be seen to be so ineffectual — we may get a students' union to ban beauty contests, but we can't hope to have so much influence with the BBC.

It could also be that an event like Miss World is so remote and detached from our lives that it becomes an absurdity to attack it, almost taking it too seriously. It came as a shock to see nine Third World countries withdrawing this year in protest at South African participation. Miss World has always been seen as above (or below?) politics.

In the student women's groups in Birmingham we feel this acutely when our protests aren't supported by women from other groups.

Miss World—TV hit of the year

THE Miss World contest has lost none of its sparkle and glamour. It was watched by a massive audience of 25 million people, the biggest audience of the year so far.

The Miss World audience was clearly boosted by the well-reported walk-out by a number of girls withdrawn by their governments in protest at the inclusion of two South African contestants, one black, one white to take part.

Many viewers probably watched the contest to see if there were any last-minute protests when the show was going out live from the Royal Albert Hall.

EVENING STANDARD.

Perhaps we should remember that beauty competitions can only take place in a society that judges women on a physical level alone. Miss World is a symbol of this — and all the implications this has for women. Symbols are hard to attack, and the show goes on.□

About 40 women did in fact protest against this year's Miss World contest. They stood outside the Royal Albert Hall holding placards denouncing the competition and its organisers for exploiting women — "Miss-taken for a ride", "Miss-represented".

Some of them wore bra and pants over their clothes to show up the artificiality of the contest. They sang songs and handed out a leaflet to passers-by: "WOMEN ARE COURAGEOUS, STRONG, CONSTRUCTIVE, INTELLIGENT, AGGRESSIVE, INDEPENDENT HUMAN BEINGS . . . NOT PLASTIC DOLLS".

The police hassled the women a bit, and Eric Morley warned the audience inside that any demonstrators would be thrown out — the Hall was crawling with security guards ready to do his bidding.

Perhaps next year we should all go along and take our clothes off to show the world what women really look like — and then they'd arrest us for indecent exposure.□

SPUC PLOTS

"I can assure you that I have no punitive attitude at all towards the unmarried mother. But the fact is that we must accept responsibility for our own actions," said Cyril Smith MP at a huge SPUC rally in Bradford on November 7.

SPUC (the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child), a fanatically anti-abortion organisation, held rallies all over the country that day. Their purpose, a CALL FOR ACTION, was "to urge the Government to introduce, without delay, legislation covering a range of abuses of the abortion law and which would include the recommendations contained in the Report of the Select Committee on Abortion. SPUC is also urging MPs to vote for the grounds for abortion to be tightened to prevent abortion on demand."

Thousands answered the call. Local groups of the National Abortion Campaign picketed some of the rallies, hoping at least to get in on the publicity. SPUC is trying to orchestrate another Private Member's Bill for the 1977 Parliamentary session. They believe the James White Bill failed because it alienated doctors and lawyers, so the new bill will be more carefully worded — and even more restrictive.

NAC, who boycotted the Select Committee because of its anti-abortion bias, start the new year with a Tribunal on January 29. It will be a focus for all who think abortion should be easier to get. People are asked to submit their personal experiences of abortion before and after the 1967 Act as evidence for the Tribunal.□

See Shortlist *for details.*

"Never let your head hang down in front of the enemy"



MICHAEL ANN MULLEN

Ximena Zavala: lucky to be released

+ ARGENTINA + MARCH–NOVEMBER '76 +

IMPRISONED: 20–30,000
DEAD: 5–10,000

+ IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO KNOW THE EXACT NUMBERS OF PEOPLE IMPRISONED OR KILLED IN ARGENTINA SINCE THE MILITARY COUP IN MARCH THIS YEAR, BUT IT IS CLEAR THAT REPRESSION HAS INCREASED HORRIFICALLY. THE GOVERNMENT REFUSES TO GIVE FIGURES, AND IT IS HARD TO DISCOVER WHAT IS HAPPENING ... +

Three Chilean women, Alicia, Catalina and Ximena, arrived in London in October, released after ten months in a prison in Buenos Aires. Roberta Henderson of the Women's Campaign for Chile talked to them about repression in Argentina now.

They were arrested at the same time as Richard Whitecross, an English publisher's representative, and his Argentine wife, Cristina. When the Whitecrosses were released last April, pressure continued to secure the release of the 15 Chileans arrested with them — five are still in jail. Alicia, Catalina and Ximena now have grants from the World University Service and will be studying in England.

They stressed that the in-

Black Women's Federation Harrassed

Over twenty black professional women in South Africa are currently being held without trial. Hundreds more, many of them schoolgirls and students, have been arrested for taking part in recent demonstrations against apartheid. Jan Marsh *reports:*

Ethel Nomkhaya Mafuna is a primary school teacher in segregated Alexandra township. Her detention was unexpected: "It came as a shock to us," said a colleague. Ms Mafuna (known as Khayo) was energetic and dedicated but not known to be politically active.

Their mother's arrest in November 1975 left Khayo's two daughters in their grandfather's care. "My mother's in jail," says 11-year-old Nombulelo. "They've taken her away," says 4-year-old Nomvula, add-

creased repression in Argentina coincides with an overall increase of repression in Latin America's 'Southern Cone' — Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay — and Brazil. Each country is run by an extreme right wing military dictatorship with the support of the United States government. The police and army of each of these countries now coordinate in arresting, torturing, sometimes killing prisoners. Catalina said they had been arrested in Argentina at the request of the Chilean junta, on the grounds that they were "working for the Chilean resistance".

They are three of thousands who left their own countries in the early 70s as repression increased and went into exile in Argentina. But exile is no longer possible in the Southern Cone.

These three women were quite lucky. They were arrested before the terror campaign reached its current peak and put in a regular prison. Today few people ever reach prison — once arrested they just "disappear". Those who are finally taken bound, blindfolded, often badly beaten up to a prison are understandably overjoyed, just to have survived.

Resistance to Torture

Over the past two months strikes have paralysed Argentina's car industry, electricity generating industry and the Buenos Aires docks, though strikes are illegal and trade unionists among those arrested. Popular resistance is widespread, but the army disguises this by talking only about the 'guerillas'.

The police now round up whole families. You can be killed just for being related to a resistance fighter. Thus, prison becomes an important 'front' in the battle, where it is vital not to give way under torture, not to let them break your morale.

Alicia, who is now living in a squat in Brixton, said, "The spirit of the Argentine prisoners is very high. The women I was with had all been tortured, but they didn't talk. They are very strong, and all their strength comes from their political consciousness. Being tortured in jail, they see themselves as prisoners of war, and say: Never let your head hang down in front of the enemy. I never saw any of the women cry."

People's resistance to torture is incredible. The army regularly tortures prisoners to death in front of their comrades, but very few give anything away. Those who die under torture are mutilated so their bodies are unidentifiable. Today, rape and electric shock are "just child's play". The torturers force some prisoners to administer electric shocks on others, the men to rape the women. While torturing they often play songs of the resistance.

Visiting Conditions

Villa Devoto, where these three found themselves after three months of brutal treatment in police headquarters, is a top security prison in Buenos Aires. There are now 400 women political prisoners there, but this number is increasing all the time and the prison is being converted to be exclusively for women. It is divided into large cells, about 30 feet by 18 feet, with 25 women to each cell.

The only visits allowed are from immediate family, for one hour a week. Visitors have to queue overnight beforehand, and the men are stripped while the women are "offensively searched". The prisoner, clothed in a coarse cotton uniform, is separated from her family by a metal grille, too small to push your finger through. For some children, these visiting conditions are so traumatic that their mothers decide they shouldn't come any more.

Prisoners can write to their families, a privilege taken away on the slightest excuse. They may receive up to £3 a week from close relatives, if they can afford it. The women pool what money they have to provide medicine and extra food for those who are ill. Tea, milk, sugar and cheese are on sale in the prison, grossly overpriced. The prison diet is dreadful and so are the medical facilities — only extreme cases are treated at all. Pregnant women spend two days in the hospital wing, then go to the mothers' cell. At six months the baby is taken away, as children over this age are not allowed in the prison.

They are roused at seven in the morning, and not allowed to lie down again until they go back to bed at night. The light is on all the time, though it is dimmed slightly at night, from 100 to 60 watts. They are not allowed to knit, sew or do anything productive, and even singing is forbidden. They get one hour's recreation a day in a small yard.

Organising Inside

Despite these conditions, morale remains high. Each cell elects a delegate to represent them in any negotiation with the prison authorities — who hate this and try to keep the prisoners separate.

After the coup, the military arrested a number of people associated with Isabel Peron's government, which they had overthrown — it too had been repressive and unpopular. One of these was Norma Kennedy, who played an important part in organising a massacre of young workers in 1973 and was involved with the organisation of the first death squads in 1974. They all protested when she was brought into the prison and forced the guards to remove her — they regarded her as a murderer and would not be responsible for what might happen to her there.

Though only light novels can be brought in, there are still a few books left from the time when regulations were less harsh, and they said that from these they managed to continue discussing and learning. They copied passages painstakingly onto small strips of paper which passed from hand to hand. One group of women got up at five every morning to study while the guards were still sleepy and slow.

Ximena recalled an incident last Christmas, when the women were preparing a celebration for New Year's Eve, decorating their cell with chains made of scraps of paper from cigarette packets. During the exercise period, drunken and resentful guards opened fire on the women and they had to duck for cover. The next day they were removed to an even grimmer cell and had to spend New Year's Eve with neither food nor water.

Alicia, Catalina and Ximena were lucky to be released. They stressed the importance of international support — it probably secured their freedom, and the knowledge that people are actively pressing their governments to "do something about the Latin American dictators" does make the prisoners feel stronger. They urged us to press the British government to allow more refugees to come here, to demand the release of thousands of Argentinians held without trial and to ensure the personal safety of foreign refugees in Argentina.□

** More information about conditions in Argentina and how you can help from the Argentine Support Movement, 1 Cambridge Terrace, London NW1.*

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ing hopefully, "I'll go to school with my mother when she comes back home next week."

Two other black women have been in custody even longer than Khayo. Phumza Dyantyi and Elisabeth Kgosana, both nurses, were arrested last summer. Phumza has been to court, had the charges dismissed, and was at once re-arrested. Elisabeth has not been seen since her arrest.

Standing Together

More recently, seven leading members of the Black Women's Federation, formed last December as an umbrella organisation for black women, have also been detained. They include Winnie Mandela, wife of African National Council leader Nelson Mandela, currently on Robben Island, and sociologist Fatima Meer, who earlier this year was refused a passport to visit Britain.

The BWF aims to "co-ordinate and consolidate black women and their organisations throughout South Africa, to define common problems and lay down priorities for effective community action". As such it threatens apartheid.

The BWF national secretary Jeannie Noel was arrested on August 18. Last year she led the resistance campaign 'Save Our Homes' against the threatened eviction of 45 coloured families in Sparks Estate, Durban. At the time Jeannie said, "Even if we lose out on the homes issue, it has been of great benefit to the community: it is the first time we have stood together and resisted." So far, the families stay.

Sally Motlana is president of the African Housewives League, vice-president of the SA Council of Churches and on



Sally Motlana, recently detained

the executive of the BWF. "We see her detention as part of a continuing attack on our organisation," say the BWF. "We feel Ms Motlana should be charged or released, so she can continue her work."□

SHORTLIST

Please send information to Anny Brackx, Shortlist Spare Rib, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1

talks & conferences

Sexist Agencies
December 17. 7.30pm at the Women's Research and Resources Centre, 158 North Gower St, London NW1. Oonagh Hartnett will talk about 'Sexism In Training Services Agency And Employment Services Agency Pamphlets'.

Labour & The NHS
January 2. 3pm at the National Museum Of Labour History, Limehouse Town Hall, Commercial Rd, London E14 (01-515 3229). Dr David Murray will give a historical account.

Feminism And The CP
January 4—6. 6—10pm at the Polytechnic of Central London, 35 Marylebone Rd, London NW1. "There will be a chance to discuss the complex impact of feminism on socialist practice and theory, during three evening sessions." The event will end with a disco at 'Henri's Dive Bar', Maiden Lane, Covent Garden. Tickets at the door. Organised by the Women's Advisory Committee of the London District CP. Contact Jane Noble (01-242 1776) for details.

Love As Oppression
January 6. At the WRRC as above. Jill Lewis will lecture on 'Political Consciousness And Male Love Poetry: Love As An Oppressive Ideology'.

Speak For Yourself
January 8. 10am—2pm at the Women's Therapy Centre, 19A Hartham Rd, London N7 (01-607 2864). Nancy Potter Lee will lead an experiential workshop to help women distinguish between assertive, non-assertive and aggressive behaviour.

European Socialist Feminist Conference
January 15. 2pm at the Women's Liberation Workshop, 38 Earlham St, London WC2. The women who went to the Paris planning meeting will report back on what decisions have been taken as to form and content of the European Socialist Feminist Conference.

Sexual Divisions.
January 20. At the WRRC. Noel and Jose Parry on 'Sexual Divisions In The Medical And Teaching Professions'.

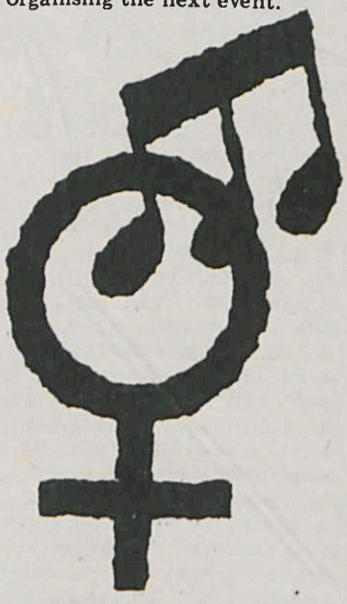
Gestalt
January 22. At the Women's Therapy Centre as above. Liz Cohen will use gestalt therapy "to reclaim our bodies, ourselves so that we can re-own parts of ourselves".

Women's Forum
February 5. 10am—4pm at St. Mary's Hall, College Rd, Bromley. Four speakers in the morning on women in education, at work, at home, and in organisations. Discussion groups in the afternoon. Creche and refreshments, books and photos. Organised by Kent Women's Forum Committee. Contact Frances Roberts (01-658 0499) or Janet Smith (01-460 7734).

Lesbianism
Some time next year. In Brighton. If you can help in any way contact Ruth at 28 Buckingham St, Brighton.

fun

Women's Monthly Event
December 18. 7pm—2am at the Basement, 29 Shelton St, London WC2. Dancing and talking. Bring your own music, poems, stories, crafts. Food, coffee and bar available. Entrance 50p (claimants 40p; children free). Profits go to organising the next event.



Any women who want to help get together the next one, write to Women's Monthly Music Event, 54 Brougham Rd, London E8.

campaigns

Women's Rights
February 12. Dayschool in Bristol on the anti-discrimination legislation and the cuts in nursery facilities. Organised by the local Labour Women's Council and the Working Women's Charter Group, 44 The Grove, Bristol 1.

February 26. Rally in Alexandra Palace, London. Theme: 'One Year On From The Sex Discrimination Act'. How effective has it been for women so far . . . Organised by the Working Women's Charter Campaign, 16 Crookham Rd, London SW6 (01-731 1231).

Two video films illustrating an equal pay case at an industrial tribunal and a sex discrimination case at a County Court (a woman who was refused a mortgage) can be hired for £15 (£10 for poor groups) from Inter Action, 14 Talacre Rd, London NW5. This includes free background notes and specimen documents. Extra copies are £1 per set.

Abortion Tribunal
January 29. 10am—10pm in Central Hall, London. The agenda includes a report on governmental evidence followed by workshops, films, theatre, evidence desk. There will be sessions and workshops on international, and on medical evidence and a rally in the evening with speakers, songs and theatre. Groups and organisations can book a stall if they want to exhibit photos, literature, etc. Contact the National Abortion Campaign, 30 Camden Rd, London NW1 (01-485 4303).

centres

Edinburgh
The centre at 31 Royal Terrace is no longer in use. New premises for a women's centre have been found at 160 Fountainbridge. The old phone (031-229 6156) can still be used for offers of help.

Glasgow
At 57 Miller St (3 up). There is one large room and 2 small offices. The group is still discussing how to use the space and what their priorities are. They are short of funds and are appealing for donations and loans to pay rent and rates. Contact Wendy (Glasgow 556 7812) or Cathy (Glasgow 221 7892) see p.29.

Aberdeen
Aberdeen Women's Liberation Group has found a place for a women's centre at St Catherine's Community Centre. If anybody wants to help contact Chris or Fiona at Old Meldrum (065 12714)

Bradford
"Bradford Women's Group is trying to set up a women's centre. We are still looking for premises and we'd appreciate advice and information from sisters who have set up centres in other towns. Please contact us at Fourth Idea Bookshop, Southgate, Bradford."

Free Space
The shopfront, kitchen and ground floor of 27 Fonthill Rd, London N4 is available for meetings, rehearsals, exhibitions, karate classes or any other feminist happenings. Write to Pat, Mo or Kathy.

plays

Costa Del Trico
January 11—16, 18—22. 9.30 pm at The Bush Theatre, Shepherds Bush Green, London W12.
January 25—29. 9pm at The Oval House, 54 Kennington Oval, London SE11.
February 4—6, 11—13. 8pm at The Albany Empire, Creek Rd, London SE8.

The Women's Theatre Group's new musical show "*Out! On The Costa Del Trico* is intended to celebrate and broadcast the most important strike for equal pay in the short, incident-ridden period since the Equal Pay Act became law." Contact Julia, 27 Stepney Green, London E1 (01-790 7649) for bookings and information.

film

How Yukong Moved The Mountains
Every evening until the end of December. At The Other Cinema, 25 Tottenham St, London W1 (01-637 9308/9). The film-makers, Joris Ivens and Marceline Loridan, had been in touch with Chinese revolutionaries for a long time before they were given "carte blanche to film a living portrait of the people of China". The film was made into five self-contained parts: *A Woman, A Family* (Peking); *The Fishing Village* (Shantung); *The Pharmacy* (Shanghai); *The Generator Factory* (Shanghai); *The Oil-Field* (Taching).

Women's Cinema
2.30pm at the Basement, 29 Shelton St, London WC2.
December 19. *Belles of St. Trinians* and *Blue Murder at St. Trinians.*
January 8. *Dance Girl Dance* (Dorothy Arzner, 1940). A look at traditional Hollywood chorus girl stereotypes. Also *The Amazing Equal Pay*

Show (London Women's Film Group).
January 22. *Vampire Lovers* and *Countess Dracula.*
For details and confirmation (01-836 6081).

That's No Lady
A 20-minute colour film about the attitudes and situations leading to wife battering. A set of scenes illustrate the daily life and relationships that any woman can experience, including acts of violence. The scenes are linked by shots of a comedian performing at a Working Men's Club. We see the audience laugh at, and applaud his jokes about women. Shots of women laughing at a scene of a husband locking out his wife and one where he is actually hitting her, highlight how tolerated violence against women is.

The film was made by Sheffield Women's Film Co-op in conjunction with the National Women's Aid Federation. It is to be used in schools, colleges and public meetings, accompanied by a talk and discussion on Women's Aid. Contact NWAF, 51 Chalcot Rd, London NW1 if you want to hire it.

Sue Lambert

pamphlets

Maternity Rights
A practical guide, showing women how to get the best available maternity rights under the Employment Protection Act 1975 and National Insurance Scheme.

The National Council for Civil Liberties is critical of the stingy provisions of the 1975 Act and is campaigning for: maternity leave on full pay for 30 weeks instead of 6; reinstatement in previous job as a right up to a year after birth, not 29 weeks; two weeks leave entitlement for fathers, on full pay.

Ultimately either parent should be able to take leave to look after their child, but, NCCL adds that equal pay must exist first.

Legislation is ineffectual while cuts in social spending continue — they must be opposed and pressure exerted to increase state child care facilities.

Maternity Rights for Working Women by Jean Coussins. 30p + postage from the National Council for Civil Liberties, 186 King's Cross Rd, London WC1.

Barbara Charles

The Unequal Breadwinner
This clearly exposes the way women are discriminated against in the social security system. It shows the disadvantages a married woman faces when she swaps roles with her husband and becomes the breadwinner.

If a married woman lives with her husband, she cannot claim Family Income Supplement, though fathers and single mothers can. She cannot claim extra allowances for her husband and children if she is getting unemployment or sickness benefit; a married man can. A man can claim extra pension for his wife as a dependent; a woman cannot for her husband. The list is long; the discrimination blatant.

Married women are forced to be dependent on their husbands. While this continues the government is only paying lip-service to equality.

The authors call for the Equal Opportunities Commission to do a full report on this issue.

The Unequal Breadwinner by Ruth Lister and Leo Wilson. 30p + postage from the NCCL as above.

Barbara Charles

Women's Health Handbook
The only women's health book that gives a good explanation of self-examination, how to do it and what to look for, illustrated by photos instead of diagrams.

It includes chapters on the NHS and signing on with a doctor, how you can change your doctor, as well as a section on drugs and claiming social security if you are sick.

We found the menstrual extraction chapter a bit mystifying, as it didn't really examine the problems.

It contains information which cannot be found in *Our Bodies, Ourselves;* it's cheaper and relates to the British situation.

The information on the latest medical developments and their side effects (the sterilisation, breast cancer and menopause sections) needs to be constantly updated, and used with other sources.

One of the messages of the book is that we cannot trust doctors to do what is in our best interests, and that women need to get more control over current medical techniques. It also points out that in this country medicine is orientated towards cure rather than prevention.

Pity that the list of health groups at the back isn't more extensive. There must be at least thirty now in this country.

Women's Health Handbook, a self help guide compiled by Nancy MacKeith costs £1 + postage and is available from 16 Methley Terrace, Leeds LS7 3NL.

Essex Rd Women's Health Group

Health Care in China
A handy 40-page medical bibliography. It covers the main aspects of Chinese health care and is divided up under separate headings like 'The pharmaceutical industry', 'Traditional medicine', 'Acupuncture', 'Re-attachment of severed limbs', 'Country-side and communes', etc. All the material can be consulted at the Anglo-Chinese Educational Institute.

Joshua Horn, author of the moving book *Away With All Pests*, on how the Chinese combatted disease, lived and worked as a surgeon in the People's Republic for 15 years. One of his lectures on the Chinese mass line in medicine serves as an introduction to the pamphlet.

Health Care in China, Modern China Series No.8. 60p from the Anglo-Chinese Educational Institute, 152 Camden High St, London NW1. Also new are *China's Social Policy* by Isaac Ascher, Modern China Series No.3 (60p) and *Introduction to China* by Innes Herdan, Modern China Series No.7 (45p).

1977

Women's Aid
This calendar contains illustrations from women in the Bradford and St. Albans refuges. Available at 75p + postage from NWAF, 51 Chalcot Rd, London NW1.

Socialist Women
Poster type calendar. See advertisement p. 9



One of the 12 posters (17" x 24") of the See Red Women's Calendar, £1.50 + 10p postage from 16a Iliffe Yard, London SE17.

journals & articles

Red Rag
"We decided to take *Red Rag* into a single-and-related theme format." This issue explores the nature of the current women's movement, from a Marxist feminist standpoint, covering consciousness-raising, small groups and mass campaigns, British feminism and class, an interview with five feminists who worked in an East London factory, and an open discussion on the relationship between feminism and the male-dominated left.

Red Rag 11. 30p + postage from 22 Murray Mews, London NW1.

Scarlet Woman
This newsletter presents an attempt towards "rebuilding the socialist feminist current within the women's movement". In this second issue the Women & Science Collective explain who they are, how they work and the problems they hit on. There is also a recap of discussions at various conferences and in groups on the question of how to integrate socialist and feminist politics.

Scarlet Woman September 1976. Available from Coast Women's Group, 5 Washington Terrace, North Shields. Send an s.a.e.

Shrew
"Traditionally *Shrew* was put together by existing groups within the London Women's Liberation Workshop." Due to changes in the structure of the Women's Liberation Movement, no *Shrew* had been produced since 1974. The Autumn 1976 issue was got together by a group of women who feel "there are few enough publications in the movement" and who think "*Shrew* is special and should continue". In this one, women write about the contradictions, psychological and material, many of us face, when we work outside the home; when we challenge or perpetuate the stereotypes of what sex does what.

Who will do the next one? Any group of women who want to have a go, should contact the Women's Liberation Workshop, 38 Earlham St, London WC2.

Shrew, Autumn 76. 30p from the Workshop.

'Why should WE raise the money?'

Women talk about why they marched



MICHAEL ANN MULLEN



ANGELA PHILLIPS (IFL)

After a rally at the EGA, staff and supporters march to meet the main demonstration

Some 80,000 people marched to Parliament on November 17 in protest against the public spending cuts. Called by the National Union of Public Employees and backed by other public sector unions, it was obvious that a wide cross-section of women would be there.

Claire Fazan and Ann Oosthuizen from Camden, and Anna Livingstone and Kim Valdez who are in a women's group at the hospital where they work, asked women how they were affected by the cuts. They felt the march was exciting because it could bridge the division between home and work: women were there as workers in the public sector and as people relying on these services, the people expected to be at home to do the extra work when services are cut.

Ann and Claire went first to the rally at the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson hospital, now under occupation to avoid closure, then down to Hyde Park where the march was assembling. The other two went straight there with a contingent from their hospital.

The first ever workers' occupation of a hospital started at the EGA two days before the demonstration, and will continue until Social Services Secretary David Ennals agrees to keep the hospital open on its present site. Staff set up a 24-hour picket at the front gate and carried on looking after the patients.

At the rally Pam Jones, shop steward, said, "The EGA is now under workers' control. We have the support of other trade union workers, the patients and women throughout the country." The unity of everyone at the EGA — ancillary workers, nurses, doctors and patients — was inspiring, and it was exciting that women were taking the lead and speaking up to protect their jobs and their hospital. The only man to speak was a branch secretary who ended his speech with "Thank you brothers" and didn't think it important to correct himself when the crowd shouted "And sisters!" We wryly noted his omission, not realising how much we would be reminded of it throughout the afternoon.

The women patients hung out of the windows to wave us off. "Now you just stay there till we get back to look after you," the demonstrators called up to them. Out-patients went with the march. Ms Maulow, a pensioner from Camden said, "What I think about this hospital is that you are treated like a human being, which is more than at most places and I'm not going to any other hospital. If I could walk I'd go on the march. I've written to my MP about the EGA — I even thought about writing to that millionaire, but he's died."

Sponsored Spelling Tests

At Hyde Park there were women from other cities. A group of cleaners from Coventry said the cuts weren't really affecting them yet —

◀EGA workers occupied just before the demonstration to stop the hospital being closed.

"The kids are lucky if they get painting once a week. There's no paper; you can paint on newspaper, but it's not the same" — nursery schools, playgroups, playgrounds cut.▼



JOHN STURROCK (REPORT)

there have been no redundancies, though staff who leave aren't replaced. "Our Council is quite good — they're opposed to the cuts, but we've got to fight all the way to keep it like that — that's why we're here today."

Some cleaners from a Hereford College of Education which is due to close in two years thought Hereford would become a 'ghost town' with shops shutting down, transport cut and all the students going. They felt they couldn't stop the closure of the college, but wanted to protest about it.

Three nurses from Bramcote Children's Hospital in Nuneaton told us, "Our own kids are doing sponsored walks and sponsored spelling sessions to raise money to pay for books. They're sending the children home from school earlier so they can shorten the dinner time and cut back on dinner ladies."

A student nurse we met from the London Hospital said that nurses are being failed in their preliminary exam after eight weeks and chucked out, and that A levels are now necessary for entry. Another nurse added, "It's difficult to get a job after training. You have to take what you can get and lick somebody's boots for it." She'll have to work nights or in the private wing when she finishes in January. She noticed long queues at lunch because of staff cuts, and ancillary workers being retired at 60.

"I don't want to go on the dole!" said Ivy Frances, who works at the EGA, pointing at a banner from H.M. Stanmore Hospital, North Wales — "Train for a nurse and qualify for the dole queue."

Community Cuts

Cuts affecting services to the community had brought out a lot of women. Three social workers from Kensington said that holidays for the old and disabled had been cut totally in their area. Eileen Dix from the Thamesmead Community Association explained, "We don't see ourselves as isolated. We're in sympathy with the rest of the country." She was marching, she said, as a mother of three boys and a member of an active and united community. One son, Matthew, was with her. All schools in the area had closed for the day in support. Kitchen staff were demonstrating about the cuts in school dinners. The local hospital, St Nicholas in Plumstead, is to be closed because the Area Health Authority needs offices. So they'll be a community of 50,000 without a hospital.

Eileen is especially interested in five playgroup schemes, but as their day-care allocation has been cut to £500 for this year, she fears they'll have to close one of the groups. All those working there believe what they're doing is essential. The supervisor of one playgroup hasn't been able to afford to pay herself for the past two weeks, even though she only gets £1.25 a session.

Women in her community, Eileen said, were hard pressed to get by on their housekeeping budgets; dinner money is 75p a week, and when that's paid they still have to cope with enormous increases in rents, rates and heating.

Not Just Extras

Indeed with inflation putting up prices, women need paid work more than ever. Ms Thurstance works at an Old People's Home in Walsall which has 38 residents. It was the first time she had been on a demonstration and she was a little awed by the large crowd. When the children were small, she said, she worked to provide the family with extras that they wanted, but now her husband's wage was not enough to keep the home going.

Four home-helps from Yorkshire NUPE told us that old people are now getting home-helps for only two hours a fortnight, not five as before. All home-helps in their area were on strike because of the cut this meant in their pay. As they were talking to us, a man approached, walked round behind them and prodded them each in the small of the back. That was the end of our conversation. The women explained they'd been told to 'shut up' by their shop steward.

Home-helps from Edinburgh said new hands aren't being taken on and no replacements are provided to cover holidays. So now they're supposed to do more work, though they don't intend to. For one it was her first visit to London. She said she hadn't realised Big Ben was so small.

Teachers we talked to from Newham and Tower Hamlets were angry that the National Union of Teachers had allowed only ten per area to come on the march. One said that a teacher from her school was on maternity leave and hadn't been replaced, and that they needed a reduction in class size. Another stressed that part-timers' and ancillary helpers' hours were being cut and no supply teachers provided to cover for illness.

Do Jumble Sales Help?

A woman working for the Society of Civil and Public Servants said she could go out to work only because her child was in a Council nursery. But fees had recently gone up from £5 to £8 a week. She thought the Council had raised the fees to limit the number of kids, particularly because of staff cuts and despite the long waiting list. She will have to change to a child minder.

Three nursery workers in NALGO confirmed that fees are rising, less food is provided for kids and staff, staffing levels are right down, toys aren't being mended and only £12 a year is available for toys and equipment for 12 children. So they're "lucky if they get painting once a week. There's no paper; you can paint on newspaper, but it's not the same." Parents have tried to raise money by jumble sales, but one woman was critical: "I don't agree with jumble sales — it helps them along." She felt the Council would do something if they let the nursery run down.

Full Potential

Having moved around and talked to a lot of women from all over the country, all four of us feel we came away with a clearer picture of what the cuts mean. What became obvious during the afternoon was that few people seemed to have a clear overall view of the cuts or a national strategy for fighting them, though they could see what was happening locally.

The women we talked to emphasized how the cuts were▶

Feminists on Scottish Assembly?

About 200 women met in Glasgow on October 30/31 for Scotland's annual women's liberation conference. Marion Foy *reports:*

It is appropriate that this year's conference was held in Glasgow. It represents Scotland's poverty, deprivation and religious bigotry at their most blatant, and is home to such celebrities as James White MP and Professor Donald, leading anti-abortion gynaecologist. But now it is open to the potential strength of the Scottish women's movement, with the setting up of the new women's centre.

This will provide both practical advice and information, and gather material with a view to producing some long overdue literature by and about Scottish women. Currently almost all feminist literature is from the USA, Europe and London.

On Saturday evening at the conference we saw "Something in it for Cordelia", a play by Joan Ure who writes specifically about women in Scotland.

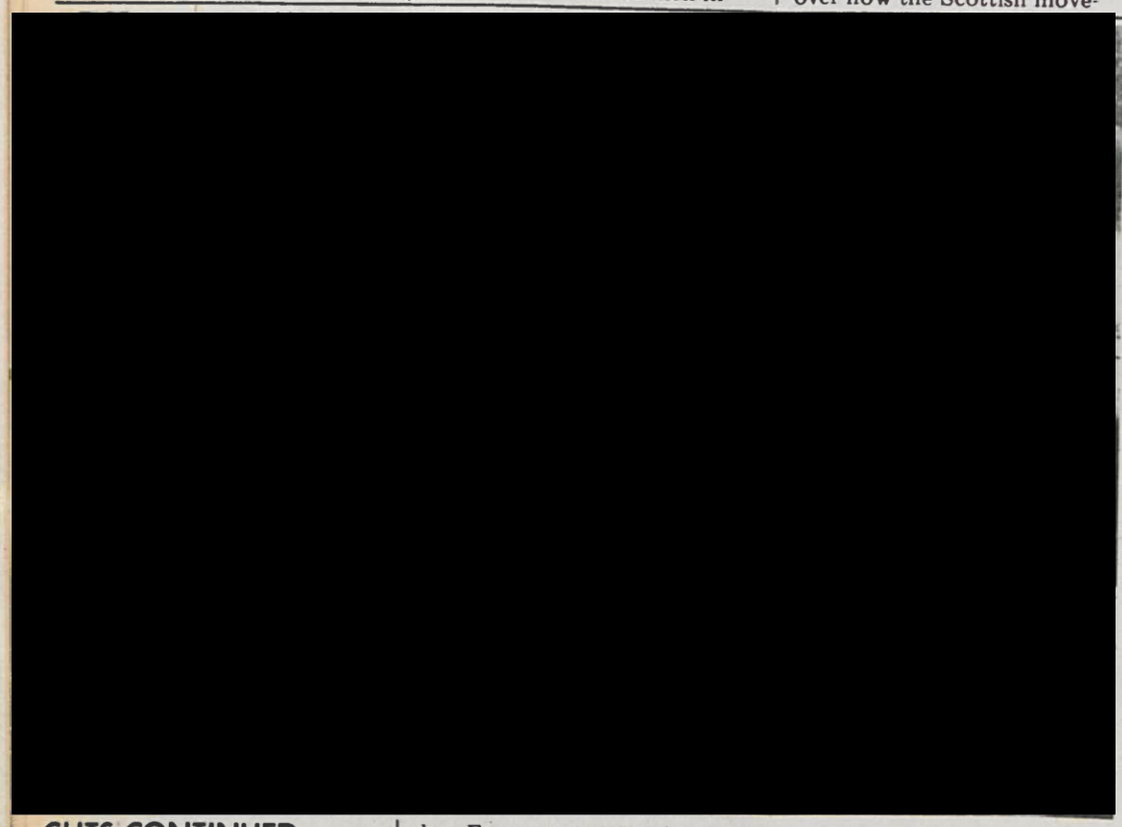
Women at the workshop on the fifth demand — for legal and financial independence — felt it was particularly important during this period of economic crisis, with the move towards Devolution and the reform of the Scottish divorce laws, for women to be represented on the Scottish Assembly. Two feminists are now on the Planning Committee, pushing for changes on such issues as abortion, child benefits and anti-discrimination legislation, which should be extended to cover tax and social security. We agreed that women needed to get in and have a say, not boycott such institutions.

The main controversy was over how the Scottish movement could become more accessible to other women. Some argued that working class women were alienated by discussion groups made up mainly of students, and by separatism, and that there is a need for national campaigns to hold the movement together — a further meeting was arranged to discuss the possibility of setting up national campaigns and a Scottish Women's Liberation Journal, to act as a forum for different views and strategies.

Other women were more in favour of confrontation *now*, directing anger outwards at the system rather than internalising it as women traditionally do. If their action were reported in the press it would reach other women. But is this a way of showing the strength of womanpower, or would it just put other women off?

From the many workshops — on music, men and feminism, psychotherapy, printing — only one motion was put to the plenary: we agreed to support any campaign to help lesbian mothers win custody of their children.□

The next Scottish conference will be in Aberdeen.



CUTS CONTINUED.....

affecting them at work, which is what their unions would also stress. Few volunteered information on how they were affected at home, although when we asked them specifically they all felt that they were.

Because the unions insisted on marching separately and because people were expected to march behind their own banners, people from the same workplace or the same area, but from different unions, were not able to share experiences and the real potential of the 17th to link up local and national struggles was greatly diminished.

November 17 was an exciting day. For many women it was the first time they had been to London. It was a day out as well as a demonstration. A day to be talked about for weeks to come, and perhaps a stimulus for further action.

Yet taking time off to come on a demonstration takes organisation. Even while they were there, women were having to fit in other things. With the long wait at Hyde Park before moving off, several women took the opportunity to go off and do a bit of Christmas shopping in the West End. Many women had to leave early to collect their children from school and take them home for tea.

Though almost half the marchers were women, all the speakers and most of the stewards were men. There were odd touches like a steward turning round to a nearly all women NUPE delegation and calling "Come on lads, keep up". To them we were just a physical presence, there to swell the numbers.

We have to face the fact that we have a long way to go before women are a real force within the Trade Union Movement. With our perspective of a woman's right to control her own body and her own life, we as feminists could help raise these issues.□

Support is needed on the picket line at the EGA — contact 01-387 2501.

Baby Milk Costs Soar

National Dried Milk doubled in price on November 15 from 20p to 40p, and is to be discontinued completely in February. When it was suddenly announced that the milk was dangerous, the government promised to introduce a substitute for babies under six months.

North Tyneside Coast Women's Group have asked MPs to raise questions as to when the substitute is coming and how much it will cost. They doubt whether NDM *is* actually dangerous if used properly, and estimate that without it baby milk alone will cost almost the equivalent of the family allowance payment each week.

Many women cannot breastfeed for a full six months for physical reasons or because they can't or don't want to stop going out to work. "Our women's group sees the move back to favouring breastfeeding at the DHSS as highly opportune at a time when women are an embarrassment on the labour market," they write. "We also see the price increases and the ending of NDM as a simple welfare cut, disguised with a scientific excuse."□

FOR NEWS OF SPARE RIB'S BOP see page 9.....

Jobs for the Girls

GLASGOW: Wendy Davies and Cathy Thomson are now employed under the Job Creation Scheme as Administrator and Research Assistant with the Glasgow Women's Liberation Group. Although there had to be a split into two clearly-defined posts, they are disowning these formal titles and sharing the workload.

So far they have been mainly involved in organising the Scottish Women's Liberation conference, and finding premises for a women's advice centre. This new centre opened on November 1 at 57 Miller Street (third floor).

When the Glasgow group succeeded, Edinburgh Women's Liberation applied for four posts under the Job Creation Scheme — other groups are encouraged to do likewise before the money runs out!□

Marion Foy

Child Benefits When?

It looks as if the full Child Benefit scheme is doomed to wait until 1979 unless the Child Benefits Now campaign can cause more of a stir in Parliament and get more women involved outside. Their third event of the autumn was another big meeting, this time in Parliament on November 24, where 200 people sat and listened to speeches.

There Stan Orme MP explained that the full scheme had been postponed because there were other priorities; Kenneth Clark MP admitted it was no longer fashionable in Parliament and ingenuously told campaigners to persuade the Treasury themselves. It didn't look hopeful. Nor was much of the talk about women: on the whole people were using the opportunity to air their view on the state of the nation.

There was a slight whiff of charity in the air, and Child Benefits Now clearly emerged as a lobbying organisation only. In this case lobbying is necessary, as it's through Parliament that the scheme could be implemented. But the lobby might carry more weight with more widespread involvement. Clare Cherrington

Contact Child Benefits Now at 1 Macklin Street, London WC2.



MICHAEL ANN MULLEN

JAM IN A LONDON BASEMENT

The first of the Women's Monthly Music Events was held on November 20 and was a total success. At last there's a place where women can dance, play, discuss and enjoy music. Not only that, there's food, drink, taped music (Joan Armatrading, Patti Smith) and women are invited to bring their instruments, songs, poems, stories or anything to sell or exchange.

The grand premiere featured a slide show on China and lots of live music including two sets from Jam Today (*pictured*). It was exciting to see so many women playing together and though it was hot, stuffy and packed out, everyone was smiling through their sweat. It finished around 2am with a free-for-all jam session.

These events will bring women interested in playing — or learning to play — out of isolation and into an atmosphere of encouragement, and they'll provide a forum for music discussion, swapping ideas and information, maybe even nurture new groups or projects.□ Marion Fudger

See **Shortlist** *for details of the next event.*



MICHAEL ANN MULLEN

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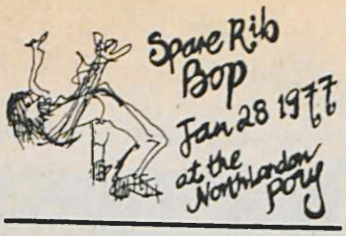
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EVENTS

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CHINA 1977: 3 week economy tour April; general tours June and August; workers tour November. SAE for details, SACU, 152 Camden High Street, London NW1

COURSES

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON GOLDSMITHS' COLLEGE, School of Adult & Social Studies, Community & Youth Work Course. Applications are invited for admission to a two-year full-time course starting in September 1977. The course is designed to train and qualify people for work with adults and young people in a variety of community settings. Applicants will usually be between 23–43 and will have worked for a minimum of two years. They will probably have had some related experience and may or may not have formal educational qualifications. They will need to decide their own priorities, organise much of their own learning, learn from their experience. Selection will be by written application and interview. For further details write to: The Admissions Tutor (SR), University of London Goldsmiths' College, School of Adult & Social Studies, Community & Youth Work Course, 38 Lewisham Way, New Cross, London SE14 6NP.

GROUPS

MOTHER GODDESS. An opportunity to meet witches who still honour the Mother. Learn about the role of women in the Old Religion. Box 548

WOMEN'S consciousness-raising group starting immediately in Muswell Hill, East Finchley, Hornsey, Highgate area. Phone Cordelia, 444 7029 if interested in joining.

RIGHTS OF WOMEN (ROW) is a group of women trying to set up a national legal resource centre available to individuals and organisations working to extend and enforce women's rights. They have started a FREE LEGAL ADVICE SERVICE for any women with a legal problem, but especially dealing with sex discrimination, employment, matrimonial and welfare issues. Open every Wed. evening 7–9 at 2 St Paul's Rd, London N1 (01-359 6656). Write, phone or call in.

I'M interested in starting or joining a women's group in Elephant and Castle or near area. Ring Charlotte 701 6763.

WORK

Chrysalis, a new feminist magazine is looking for women to handle distribution and promotion in your area on commission. If you are interested, please send a letter describing your experience and availability to Gail Goodman, 3025 S. Barrington No.10, Los Angeles, CA 90066. We especially encourage women with previous or current experience in feminist magazine and newspaper distribution to write to us.

WOMEN'S AID (Barnet Borough) desperately needs volunteers. Please ring Brenda Morley 01-449 5203

Two volunteers wanted to join co-operative: one with experience in research/writing, able to share knowledge in non-sexist way, for political research on multi-nationals; other interested in political/community work; both also able to work about 24-hour week in food shop/community cafe. Low pay but joint control. Write: UHURU, 35 Cowley Rd, Oxford.

SELF-HELP BUILDING PROGRAMME: Opportunities for women/men 16+ to work alongside trained craftsmen in all aspects of the building trade. Some work on publications/filmshows/photography. Work with kids in workshop situations. Sharing in all work, including housekeeping. Communal living. Accommodation/food provided with one month stay; wage negotiable after 6 months. Great Georges Community Arts Project, Great George St, Liverpool 1. Tel. 051-709 5109

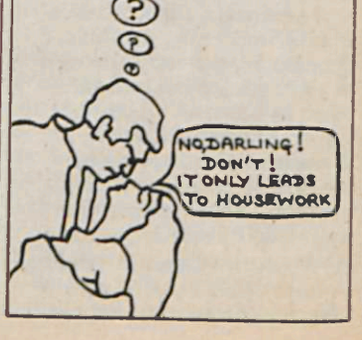
New group setting up Accommodation Centre for Homeless need 2 workers to start Jan/Feb: organizing /admin. skills, community/social work experience, all useful. Shift-work, good salary, live out. Interest in collective organizations essential. Plus 3 support workers to live in, with food and £10 per week. Details: Riverpoint, 229 King St, London W6. 01-741 2888

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SAPPHO lesbian/feminist magazine. 50p incl. post. Basement, 20 Dorset Sq, NW1. Meetings every Tuesday 7.30pm Chepstow Pub, Chepstow Place, W2

WOMEN'S LIBERATION WORKSHOP (Women's Information and Newsletters Service), 38 Earlham St, London WC2 (01-836 6081). Open usually 12–10pm weekdays, 12–6 Sat. Feminist information centre and meeting place. Books and publications, women's groups, referral services, coffee room, meeting rooms, resident film and art groups. Weekly newsletter (including calendar). Subscription 15p a copy, 10p at the Workshop. Run by an open collective. For women only.

THE GIRLS' GUIDE – 1976 FOR GAY WOMEN. Annual pocket size international bar/club guide and complete directory. This third edition: 2000 listings/40 countries, £2 only from THE GIRLS' GUIDE, 1 North End Rd, London W14 (mail order only–one week delivery). Also at: Sterling's Bookstore, WC2 and Symposium Bookstore, 12 Market St, Brighton

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WIRES is the National Women's Liberation Information and Referral Service. Send all your information and queries to us and keep in touch with the movement by subscribing to the newsletter (twice monthly). Rates: individual subs £5 a year (£3 for poorer sisters) Group subs £3 a quarter–6 newsletters. £12 a year; each additional newsletter 50p for 3 months supply. Send cheque/POs and donations payable to WIRES c/o 30 Blenheim Terrace, Leeds 2. T: LDS 35561 (just ask for WIRES, it's a shared phone).

VISIONS alternative/community bookshop: wide range of sex-pol. literature, 155 Archway Rd, London N6. Open Wed–Sat 12–6pm

WOMEN AND REVOLUTION–Revolutionary Marxist journal, summer issue (No.12) 35p (stamps OK) to iSt, Box 4272 London WC1

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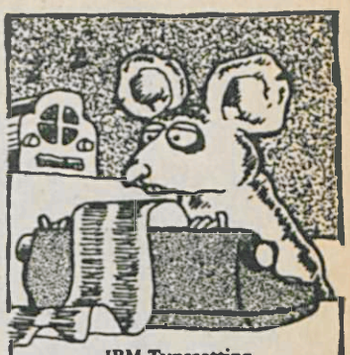
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WINNERS OF LAST MONTH'S JOAN ARMATRADING COMPETITION WILL APPEAR IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE

DORA RUSSELL

A QUEST FOR LIBERTY AND LOVE

Drusilla Modjeska interviews Dora Russell at her home in Cornwall, and Sheila Rowbotham explains why the journey which Dora Russell and other feminists travelled in the 1920s is still of vital significance to us today.



SALLY GREENHILL

Above: Dora Russell, September 1975
Below: Dora Russell, aged 18



FROM 'THE TAMARISK TREE'

After the First World War women over thirty got the vote and feminists concentrated on other issues like equal pay. But there was dissatisfaction — especially amongst younger women. They felt that in demanding equal rights with men, the older generation had neglected the position of women as women. By glossing over the differences between the sexes, the equal rights approach restricted feminism to a minority of exceptional, middle class women.

The "new feminists" were concerned about biology, sexuality and maternity, wanting a more positive approach to child rearing and education, and searching

FROM 'THE TAMARISK TREE'



Above: Dora Russell with the bulk of the Penzance 1926 General Strike Committee

Below: A candidate and his supporters, 1923. In the foreground, left to right: Stella Browne, Dora, and Bertrand Russell

FROM 'THE TAMARISK TREE'



for an alternative to masculine culture. They demanded maternity leave, family allowances, sex education, birth control and even abortion. Politically they ranged from liberals committed to extending welfare reforms, to socialist feminists struggling to connect feminism and sexual liberation to class politics. For socialists like Dora Russell and Stella Browne[1] birth control was the basis for woman's control over her own body. This control was necessary if women were to express their own sexual needs which had been stifled in a society dominated by men. Stella Browne wrote, "There has grown up a masculine mythology suppressing and distorting all the facts of women's sexual and maternal emotions."

During the 1920's there was an international movement for sex reform in which socialists in Germany and the Soviet Union were especially involved. The World League For Sexual Reform was formed to understand all aspects of sexuality; it agitated for sex education, homosexual rights and birth control. Both Dora Russell and Stella Browne were associated with the League which finally disintegrated with the threat of fascism and internal political quarrels in the 1930's.

In 1923 the prosecution of Guy Aldred and Rose Witcop on an obscenity charge for publishing *Family Limitation* by the American birth controller Margaret Sanger, and the sacking of a welfare nurse in Edmonton, London, for giving information about birth control clinics, focused these issues. A campaign was started in the labour movement involving unemployed women's organisations, Labour and Communist Party branches, and trade unions. It was very much an agitation from below and Stella Browne and Dora Russell played an active part. They wanted all women to know about birth control and they wanted the welfare centres to give advice to working class mothers.

Dora Russell has described this campaign, her activity in the Workers Birth Control Group and the international movement for sexual liberation in her autobiography *The Tamarisk Tree*[2]. The book is subtitled "My Quest for Liberty and Love" and deals not only with the external struggles for sexual politics but with her own attempt to connect personal living with her feminism. She wanted to show "how personal and public life were interwoven".

There is the young girl growing up in the Edwardian era, among a tiny minority of women to enter higher education as a student at Girton, Cambridge, and encountering Bertrand Russell — the symbol for her generation of opposition to the capitalist war mongers. She set out bravely enough; travelling with him first to the Soviet Union, then to China, bearing children, marrying reluctantly, trying to maintain sexual and emotional honesty and openness, starting a free school where children could learn to organise themselves.

The end of the book is sad. She was left vulnerable and humiliated by Russell's desertion and by the death of Paul Gilliard, the young Communist she loved. The sadness was not only personal but political; she was stranded in a world where depression, fascism and war narrowed political options. She writes, "There are periods in human history when, without apparent reason, at first imperceptibly, the movement in one direction goes into reverse. The change occurs not only in economics and politics of the time, but even in the motivation of individual lives . . . a mood, an atmosphere which affects the ideas and conduct of individuals, almost unknown to themselves."

There is a necessary distance between the new feminists of the 1920's and today. We are somewhat more wary of sexual freedom, questioning how honest honesty can be in a world where all sexual feeling is distorted. How can pleasure itself be disentangled from compulsive consumption, and the marketing of delight, of modern capitalism?

And the argument between the "new feminists" and the supporters of equal rights has turned full circle. The former's emphasis on the special quality of female values like sensitivity and intuition, assumes that women have somehow remained unaffected by capitalism and patriarchy. It suggests that we carry intact an alternative culture — that oppression leaves us innocent of history. Similarly, the way the "new feminists" stressed motherhood instead of demanding that both men and women care for children, could reinforce ideas about women's separate role. Our ▸



SALLY GREENHILL

problem is rather to find ways of distinguishing our specific needs and creating a society in which these can be expressed as real rather than ideal alternatives.

Nonetheless, the journey which Dora Russell and the other feminists of the 1920's have travelled is still of vital significance. It has remained obscure for too long. So many of her struggles are still our struggles, even though we are perhaps a little less lonely this time around.

Dora Russell was interviewed at her home in Cornwall by Drusilla Modjeska

How did you become involved in the birth control campaign in the early 1920's?

I first came into the political movement for birth control in 1923 to fight the suppression of the Aldred pamphlet on birth control. We found that there was so much ignorance about the question, and so much feeling among women was being stifled, that a group of labour women formed to raise the question on a political basis. And that was when we came up against the official attitude of the Labour Party that sex questions had no place in politics.

On the eve of the conference of the women's section (May 1924) it was Marion Phillips, the labour women's organiser herself, who tried to get us to withdraw the resolution [that in institutions under the control of the Ministry of Health — welfare centres — doctors should be able to give advice on birth control]. Well, she terrified me, she was a very tall woman, it was my first conference and I was very scared. But I told her that I thought she was going to get a surprise — and we carried the resolution 1,000 votes to 8.

The interesting thing was that they couldn't get anybody to speak on the other side. What astonished everybody was the intense hostility shown by women to bearing children. It was regarded as the great joy of every mother and the noble work of womanhood and there they were, all getting up and saying they couldn't stand it, they weren't going to have it and they must have it limited.

The Labour executive continued to oppose us, partly because of the Catholic vote, so we started up our propaganda throughout the country and took a deputation to the Minister of Health. We were arguing that the spacing of your children and the limitation of your children was an essential part of maternity care and had nothing to do with economics and how much money you had. It was the woman's right we were at, and this was a new thing because the argument on both sides was usually about economics.

Do you think it was because you were arguing in terms of a woman's right to control what happens to her own body that you met so much opposition?

I don't think that anybody at that time accepted what we speak of today as the woman's right to decide herself whether she has a child or not. The subservience of a woman to her husband was very strong, particularly among working class women. If you read Marie Stopes' book about mothers, they would talk about sex relations with their husbands as "he doesn't bother me" or "he bothers me all the time". They always evaded sexual relations as far as they possibly could because they were terrified of having more children. Rejecting their husbands' advances was the only means they had of protecting themselves.

Did people confuse what you were saying with eugenicist and Malthusian ideas of population control?

Well, there were two sides of it. There were the people who spoke about the worst stocks reproducing themselves which was the eugenicist view. And you usually found that the so called worst stocks were the poorer people and for that reason we completely dissociated ourselves from the eugenics group. That was why we founded the Workers' Birth Control Group.

The Clydeside MPs accused us of telling the working classes

that they couldn't have so many children because they were poor; we replied that it's not a question of economics, or of the best stocks, it's simply a woman's question in relation to her husband. And that was one reason why we were the only group in England advocating birth control which was acceptable to the Russians during the 1920's.

How much did your trip to Russia in 1920 influence your ideas and politics on the woman question?
It didn't alter my views but I did find a much more enlightened attitude there. I was particularly impressed by a film about abortion which was being shown all over the Soviet Union in workers' clubs and organisations. Women were being told about their bodies in a way that was quite unknown in our country. And I was impressed that the whole issue of sex relations and marriage laws was being raised.

As part of general revolutionary politics?
Oh yes, it never occurred to the Russians to separate the woman question from the revolution. From the beginning women were associated with the whole revolutionary movement. Though Alexandra Kollontai, who I spoke to in 1920, was not satisfied with the attitude towards children. And one or two of the comrades I spoke to didn't seem to realise that the revolution had to offer something to women.

Did Stalin's reversal in 1936 of so many of the policies concerning women and the family, sweep the carpet out from under your feet?
I think things may have slipped back to some extent in Russia, but it's never been completely taken away from them. Like Stella Browne, I've been disillusioned. Of course, I have never had any illusions about the male attitude in all the political parties to women's questions in this country, but I was disillusioned by developments in Russia later.

But it hasn't altered my attitude to the Russian people as a whole. The emancipation of women did come there at the same time as the revolution. Here we had a stable society, more or less, with gradual progress in giving the vote to working people; but women here have had to fight inch by inch for all the things they wanted. In Russia women were a part of the revolution and their rights came as part of the revolution.

Up to 1929 there was considerable progress being made here. But in 1933 came the Reichstag fire and the rise of Hitler to power, and then came the Spanish Civil War. Those people who were alarmed by what was going on moved to the right and those people who still stuck to their principles, but didn't quite know what to do, went on desperately fighting on the left and perhaps moved a little more left.

Another point is that the movement for [birth control] clinics had widened by then. I found that a great many people were drifting off into welfare work. The Workers' Birth Control Group had always been associated with the working class struggle, and then all these well meaning women went off and founded clinics.

My view at the time was that if you leave this work to voluntary action, the Government won't do anything. We argued that birth control was an integral right of the mother and not a charitable thing to be done by some kind person setting up a clinic to which women can come for a small fee. It was something that belonged to maternity care, and to the care of children, and which concerned the whole society. I thought that then, and I still think it now.

I was impressed that in your autobiography you were always aware of the connections between personal and political revolt, and how you have tried to combine the two in your life. You were doing it at a time when you had very little social support. Did you feel that you were very much alone?
Oh yes, I did. By the end of the 1920's I was feeling terribly alone. I mention in my book how I felt after my visit to Russia in 1929; how I felt that I had "become increasingly aware of how irreconcilable was my view of private and public morality, with that still held by the majority at home". That's the sense in which I felt very much alone. Then I write about how there was "an unconscious polarisation of thought, for some back to the status quo, for others forward still to a forlorn hope for the future".

It happened in my own family. It happened to Bertie and me. It was like in the Dollar Princess — she moves left, he moves right, out of mind, out of sight. Yes, I really did feel it. I had this view about relations between men and women, of love being freely given, and we started the school because we had believed that we could rear children to live in a more co-operative society. It was never easy . . . When it comes to the crunch, men have more to lose.

There have been a number of points in my life when, like any wife, I had to make choices in relation to my husband's work. I gave up trying to be an actress because I found it wasn't going to fit in. Russell said to me when he first proposed that he didn't want me to grace the head of his table, but when it came to the point that is what he wanted. I found I couldn't spend all evening understudying at the theatre when he wanted friends entertained at home.

In the 1930's there doesn't seem to have been a new generation of younger women fighting specifically on feminist issues.
Well, the thing that has always astonished me is that the generation after mine accepted a great deal of what had been won with the vote and certain opportunities in work and so on, and there was a whole period when people thought that after the vote the question had been solved — yet very little had changed. For instance the marriage laws were not changed.

There were a great many things in the lives of women which still needed to be fought for over those years. Motherhood is the essential thing in which women are different from men. I think that the influence of women and the values that we have could be important in trying to control the industrial machine.

Do you think that there is a danger or a difficulty when concentrating on motherhood and pursuing that line politically that you end up reinforcing women's role in the home? Rather than combining it with women's industrial struggle? Isn't it important to get away from the idea of a "separate feminine sphere" that has been used so effectively against us?
Not at all. On the contrary. I think that what I say conflicts in some way with some of the line that women's liberation is taking which I think is mistaken. If you are going to take the line that you simply want to fit yourself into the system as it is now and give women all the same rights as men, they can train for any job and so on, then you are accepting this technological society in which we live as the best possible society that we can have. You will not put yourself in a position to change it.

I don't think that is the line that most feminists today would accept. I don't think that the liberation of women — or of anyone — is possible without really radical changes throughout society, economically, materially and culturally.
Well, take this question of paying every woman for her housework. It is true that a woman is doing a lot of unpaid work. Housework is mostly done by the woman, which means that she is often doing a double job. But if you reach that point, which I find very alarming, when each person is "alone in the face of the universe" with nothing to support you but your economic relation to the state, I think this is one of the most dangerous things that could happen.

I have always thought it important that there should be an independent body of left wing women, irrespective of male political parties. I think that women's conferences of the political parties were always conscious of the fact that they were only a part of the male party. It didn't work us going into the parties like that, and I think that is why a lot of the impetus of the women's movement was lost.

It's a long struggle.□

Notes

1 Stella Browne campaigned for birth control and abortion between the wars in the labour movement. A founding member of the Abortion Law Reform Association, she was the author of several works on birth control, abortion and sexuality.

The Tamarisk Tree *My Quest For Liberty And Love, by Dora Russell published by Elek/Pemberton, £5.95. A paperback edition will be published by Virago on April 28 1977 at £1.95.*



Ruth Hamblin describes some natural remedies

THR

Monilia, Candida, Thrush, Yeast, The Itch are different names for the same thing. White spots develop in and around the vagina, with itching, inflamation and/or soreness. Sometimes there's white vaginal discharge that may be light or quite heavy and thick like cottage cheese, smelling yeasty like new baked bread. It occurs because the fungus eats into the vaginal walls and cells are shed at a greater rate than usual.

Thrush is very irritating and can make you extremely sore if it's allowed to continue. Some women suffer from it and most of us have had it at one time or another. It can be controlled with a little understanding of the workings of a woman's vagina.

All warm, wet places on this planet are teeming with microscopic life — tiny plants and animals. Some of them are fungi. The healthy vagina contains a great number of different colonies of plants and animals all living together in perfect harmony. The balance of these colonies is entirely dependent on the normal acid-alkaline balance of secretions into the vagina. It is the human pond and functions the same way as any other pond. Its internal life remains balanced as long as its external environment is stable.



CAUSE

Upsetting the Balance

If we introduce new chemicals into the vagina, or if the chemical balance changes, it either kills off whole colonies of plants directly or alters their food supply.

Monilia or Candida are two names for one fungus which lives quite normally and naturally in woman's vagina alongside all the others, until the balance is upset and certain other colonies are wiped out (including lactobacillus). Then Monilia takes over, spreads and grows out of all healthy proportion so that the condition we call Thrush results.

Natural Cleanser

Three subtances are normally secreted in the vagina: there's white or yellowish cervical mucous produced by tiny glands around the cervix - when it's clear a woman is fertile, when it goes cloudy she's not — and there's liquid secreted by the vaginal walls, and the regularly shed dead cells. The secretions increase when a woman is sexually aroused and vary during the menstrual cycle.

All contain simple sugars which are the food supply for the microscopic plants and animals in the vagina including one called lactobacillus. Excess sugars cause trouble. Lactobacillus, the natural cleanser of the vagina, breaks down the sugars into lactic acid to keep the vagina acid and healthy.

Antibiotics

Lactobacillus can be killed off by various chemicals which reach the vagina either directly, through what we put into it, or indirectly via the blood stream when we take drugs like antibiotics to kill off some other colony of bacteria or virus elsewhere in the body. The balance of organisms in the vagina is then lost and Thrush results. So it's as well to think twice before taking antibiotics, using them only if there is no possible alternative treatment. Natural methods of treatment strengthen the body's resistance, antibiotics weaken it by killing off useful organisms.

Hormones

Another cause of Thrush is an imbalance of female hormones. This can occur when a woman becomes pregnant, or by a hormone imbalance which shows itself in various menstrual problems. If the pill is the cause, and Thrush does not respond to the yoghurt treatment described below, it may be necessary to change the pill or to come off it altogether.

Chemicals

The introduction of chemical substances into the vagina, i.e. deodorants, soap containing perfume or dye, bubble bath or certain substances used for douching, causes Thrush.

PREVENTION

To prevent Thrush, Cystitis and other troubles:

- keep the vagina area dry and airy
- wash it with warm water and soap without perfume and dye, which is available from most chemists and some natural products shops
- wear cotton pants, as nylon creates artificial heat. Persistent sufferers should avoid wearing tights, tight clothes or trousers made of artificial fibres
- when wiping your bottom, wipe from front to back otherwise you risk a colli infection as well
- let some sunlight onto your vaginal area when you can arrange it

Diet

The substances you eat and drink are carried in your blood to all the tissues of your body. If you are being troubled by Thrush or anything else, it helps your body overcome the invasion if you avoid irritants like coffee, strong tea (Indian dyed tea), or foods containing chemical additives. It also helps if you stop eating animal foods for a while because digesting them produces toxins.

Take plenty of fresh vegetables, and if you want, try a cleansing diet which is rich in Vitamin B.

- for breakfast (or with another meal): natural yoghurt, wheat germ, honey, fruit and nuts (fresh or dried)
- for lunch: plenty of salad and vegetables and comfrey, some whole grain or wholemeal bread
- for evening meal: the same with beans and/or seaweed

Try it for three to ten days. For protein use soya bean paste (miso) or tamari soy sauce or TOFU — soya bean curd, or soya meat

RUSH *for the prevention and cure of a vaginal complaint*

substitutes. All are available from health food shops. It is also helpful to drink a cleansing tea — red clover with comfrey and nettle (see below for brewing instructions) which is soothing, healing and rich in iron.

Simple sugars are present in all fruits and vegetables. They are the food of the lactobacillus. The use of refined sugar aggravates Thrush; try eliminating it from your diet.

Stress

Stress is the biggest single factor in triggering off diseases and preventing healing. If you are often under stress, change your life situation before it changes you. And poor general health leads to more ailments so make sure you are getting proper food, rest, exercise and fresh air.

TREATMENT

Yogurt

If you feel a slight itch in your vagina, don't ignore it. Go straight out and buy some natural live yoghurt, it contains lactobacillus acidopholus — the vaginal cleanser. Warm a little up to hand temperature — any warmer will kill the culture. Fill a tampax with warmed yoghurt, keeping the tampax in the end so the yoghurt doesn't run out. Insert the yoghurt and then the tampax into your vagina and change it every few hours. Continue the treatment for as long as necessary; it will replace your lost lactobacillus and can't hurt you as long as you use it hygienically.

Vinegar Bath

When you bath put some cider vinegar in the water to help restore the proper acid balance inside the vagina. Let the vinegar water into your vagina but avoid getting soapy water inside.

If you catch Thrush in time, and rest in a calm state of mind after using yoghurt and eating your greens, the Thrush won't have a chance and will soon be gone. Real problems only arise if the Thrush is neglected and allowed to take a strong hold. Then make sure you have stopped doing what is causing it and continue with the basic treatment. If the vaginal opening is sore try a nappy rash cream made up of boric acid and lanolin. Or try an old plant remedy: paint antiseptic, soothing Gentian Violet on the inside of the vagina. Get someone to do it for you using sterile instruments and a speculum.[1]

Douching

If you have it badly you may try douching but it should only be used with great care when a discharge is heavy and the Thrush is advanced. You can obtain a douche from a chemist. It's a rubber bulb which you fill with water and a tube which you insert into your vagina, squeezing the water out of the bulb. These days, ordinary douches are hard to obtain, chemists sell enema sets instead which work in exactly the same way but are more expensive. When douching wait until air is out of the tubing and the solution starts running through before putting the nozzle into your vagina.

For douching use cider vinegar — one part diluted with three parts of clean water. Or an infusion of thuja which is a natural fungicide, golden seal, calendula (marigold) or sage. Use one ounce of dried herbs to one pint of water in an enamel pan and bring to simmer. Leave it standing for ten minutes and strain it carefully. Douche with the infusion twice daily for a week or as long as necessary.

Fungicides

If you want to go to your doctor and get a fungicide to kill the Monilia, ask for Nystatin, and make sure that he/she doesn't give you an antibiotic as some doctors are very ignorant about Thrush and vaginas.

Relaxing Exercises

Relaxation of the muscles around the vagina is very helpful in curing vaginal infections of all kinds: lie on the floor and make yourself comfortable. Concentrating on relaxing the muscles around your vagina; let your muscles feel loose. Imagine your blood flowing into the area. Imagine that your vagina feels vibrant and tingles. Picture the mucous in your vagina as slightly moist and healthy. Do this each day until healed.

Another useful exercise is to lie on the floor on your back with your head and shoulders on two pillows. Bend your knees up, keeping your feet on the floor. Let your knees spread as far as you can, with the soles of your feet touching each other. Relax the muscles in your vaginal area. Place your hand over your vagina so you can feel the muscles relax. Rest in this position as long as you wish. This exercise stretches the muscles and tendons in the vaginal area and helps you loosen up. Learning how to relax muscles in the vaginal area is helpful in preventing Thrush because relaxed pelvic muscles maintain the vaginal organisms at a healthy balance.[2]



Acupuncture

If you have had Thrush for some time and can't get rid of it, I suggest you try acupuncture in conjunction with self help methods. Note the points needled and massage them every day yourself until complete recovery — then follow preventative measures with great care.

If you are just recovering from Thrush, don't resume sexual intercourse too soon. Wait until all the soreness is gone. Don't allow yourself to get sore — if you need extra lubrication use KY jelly from any chemist.

Preventative measures are very simple and soon become a part of life. Look after your health, watch for early warning signs, don't put more chemicals into your body than is absolutely necessary, then your vagina will look after itself.□

Notes:

1 A speculum is an instrument for holding open the vagina for examination.

2 From **The Well Body Book** *by Mike Samuels and Hal Bennett, Random House/Bookworks.*

The Society of Herbalists, *65 Emmanuel House, 18 Rochester Row, London SW1 provides information on herb cultivation, books and supplies. Stockists of herbs:* **Baldwin's Herbalists,** *Walworth Road, London SE17 and* **Haelen Centre,** *39 Park Road, London N8.*





Adapted from a poster in the collection of the Imperial War Museum. Facsimiles of the original are obtainable from the Museum.

reviews

BOOKS

ALONE OF ALL HER SEX
by Marina Warner
(Weidenfeld and Nicolson)

Alone of Her Sex analyses the workings of a symbol: the Virgin mother of Christ whose inimitable purity serves as a perpetual reproach to her mortal sisters.

Marina Warner demonstrates how the Virgin has acted as an ever changing focus of propaganda and worship for the Catholic church. As the book unravels we see how Mariology has been affected by the demands of the church at different historical periods. But the book's structure somewhat masks the nature of these changes and their contexts.

Within the book each of the five sections is devoted to an isolated characteristic of Mary: Virgin; Queen; Bride; Mother; and Intercessor. Further sections describe the complex symbolic meaning of her attributes, for example her tears and her milk. But only two of her roles — Queen and Intercessor — are related to historical changes. For the rest the reader must dart about with the argument which is imaginatively researched and vividly presented but confusingly arbitrary in outline.

The very existence of the Virgin within Catholicism is a result of historical necessity. In the Bible, Mary appears as only a fleeting presence in the Gospel of St. Luke. As the human, mortal mother of Christ she was invented by the Christian orthodoxy of the 2nd century in its battle against the Gnostics, a sect who threatened the egalitarian appeal of Christianity by maintaining that Christ had no experience of mortality and was indeed nothing but a divine phantom.

Later the separation of the church into East and West gave the Virgin an additional role. As a regal figure she symbolized the triumphant supremacy of the Western church and its papal leader against their adversaries in Constantinople.

This virgin queen, remote from the crowd of the faithful, eventually merges in the feudal era with the cult of courtly love. Here the lover reveres his mistress as unobtainable and divine. Marina Warner shows how the cult of the Virgin was used to reduce the danger of female power inherent in courtly love: "by contrasting human women with the sublime perfection of the Virgin, earthly love could be discredited and men's eyes turned once again heavenwards". Similarly, poets and painters revealed the Virgin as the elevated Bride of Christ, crowned by him Queen of Heaven.



ATTRIBUTED TO MASSACIO

15th century Virgin with bare feet like a peasant

In the 15th century a democratic bourgeoisie literally brought the Virgin down to earth. Contemporary images show her seated on the ground, the Christ child at her breast: a popular image known as the Madonna of Humility. "The new domestic idealism", writes Marina Warner, "was projected onto the Holy Family . . . the cult of humility, understood as female submissiveness to the head of the house, set the seal on the Virgin's eclipse as matriarchal symbol. Nowhere can this be seen more clearly than in the rise of Joseph in importance from the end of the 14th century onwards."

In the 16th and 17th centuries Catholic absolutism once again enforced a static order of hierarchies, similar to feudalism. Images of God, King and Virgin are all characterised by a sense of distance and awe. Mary's inviolable purity is extended even to her own conception, which is now, like her son's, miraculous and supernatural.

Marina Warner's main argument, that the Virgin myth is basically repressive, gathers force with her evidence. The moral implications of a Virgin Mother of God are central to the Christian religion; its association of sex with original sin. Mary was preceded by many virgin goddesses, but their chastity was symbolic only. They were not the perpetuators of an ideal ascetism, on the contrary they were the Love Goddesses of Antiquity and the Near East: Aphrodite, Ishtar, Astarte and Anat. Their honorary virginity signified no Christian humility and self abnegation but rather an autonomy, and even a freedom to select lovers of their choice. They celebrated the sensual nature of women. Through a yearly purification ceremony they could have their cake and eat it! Virginity was coupled with and symbolic of strength alone. Marina Warner comments: "The interpretation of the virgin birth as the moral sanction of the goodness of sexual chastity was the overwhelming and distinctive contribution of the Christian religion to the ancient mythological formula."

The purity of the Virgin-Redeemer, obviously unobtainable for most women, clearly demarcates her virtue from their sin — as does her exemption from another major curse of Eve, painful childbirth. Humility remains the major Marian virtue most adaptable to the social situation of women from the 14th century onwards. " . . . it is this very cult of the Virgin's 'femininity' expressed by her sweetness, submissiveness and passivity that permits her to survive, a goddess in a patriarchal society".

Marina Warner's underlying theme is the relation of myth

reviews



17th century Virgin crowned Queen of Heaven VELASQUEZ

to society. We see Mary transformed from an image of propaganda for the church to that external norm which corresponds to the actual needs of all women and men: both the "Florentine artisan of the Renaissance and the Irish housewife today find a tragically flawed consolation in the sweet maid of Nazareth who bowed her head and submitted unmurmuring to her destiny". While at the same time, "By defining the limits of womanliness as shrinking, retiring acquiescence, and by reinforcing that behaviour in the sex with praise, the myth of female inferiority and dependence could be and was perpetuated."

Within the confines of Catholicism, Marina Warner describes the workings of the Virgin myth. But she remains trapped in that tradition. Maybe a more stimulating, basic understanding of the Virgin could be achieved by cross-cultural comparisons. How, for example, has woman's role and self definition related to the feminine component in other religions? And what was the significance of the Protestant rejection of a highly successful Mariology?

Perhaps more importantly Marina Warner does not really examine the relation between the material structure of society and its ideological basis and so the function and reverberation of the Virgin myth are not sufficiently clarified.

That said, this mass of information drawn from a wide survey of theology, painting and popular belief, makes an important contribution to the reappraisal of our culture from a feminist position.

Lindy Blackburn

THE RIGHTS AND WRONGS OF WOMEN

edited and introduced by Ann Oakley and Juliet Mitchell

(Pelican, £1.25)

This is a collection of papers on the position of women which draws on a diverse selection of subjects. The emphasis falls on history but also included are papers on literature, education, sociology, American trade unions and China.

I took this book away on holiday, which is often a test of my concentration and commitment to serious themes. However I enjoyed reading it and found many of the papers interesting and thought-provoking. I liked all those on history — Sally Alexander for instance gives a fascinating account of women's waged labour in London in the 19th century, revealing the multitude of occupations that have long remained obscure. She points out that industrialisation affected trades in various ways and at varying rates in different areas, the sexual division of labour was ideologically maintained with each change, and a male-dominated hierarchy of labour power recreated in every trade.

Dorothy Thompson traces women's involvement, often violent, in 19th century radical politics, and particularly working class women's role in the Chartist movement. Leonore Davidoff, Jean L'Esperance and Howard Newby examine the idealisation of domesticity and rural life, also in the 19th century, which helped to define and control women's lives and maintain patriarchal power relationships. This ideology has been passed down and reproduced in present day suburbia.

Ann Oakley combines history and sociology in an interesting paper on the transfer of control of reproductive care from women to men. She looks at the way men separated themselves from women as professional doctors and surgeons, leaving the "dirtier" aspects of childbirth in the hands of midwives. Her paper highlights the contradiction that while a major concern in the women's movement is with the control of our own bodies for reproduction, this is still very much within a system where men control the development of contraceptives and the medical conditions of childbirth.

I particularly enjoyed Margaret Walters' detailed accounts of the lives and writings of Mary Wollstonecraft, Harriet Martineau and Simone de Beauvoir, from which the book takes its title. She links together very well their personal lives and the social contexts in which each was writing, and the difficulties they faced, although at different points in time, in trying to redefine themselves as women.

Although I liked so many of the papers, I was distressed by the editors' introduction. In this they criticize the meaning of "sisterhood" in the women's movement. They see it as an inadequately thought out concept which ignores the hierarchies that surround us covering the absence of any real unity between women. They "detect a move towards rigidity and inflexibility within the women's movement which we feel results from premature codification of personal insights as political rules", and see the answer as "going back to the drawing board". This involves rewriting history and other disciplines from a feminist viewpoint.

I agree that we need to rework subjects, but the arrogant tone of the criticism made me feel put down and then rather indignant. It seems unconstructive to make these kinds of statements about a movement as diverse and amorphous as women's liberation. It has so many different strands of activity, ideology and politics that it's hard to be in touch with all of them, let alone see them moving in the same direction.

Fortunately the editors' criticisms are not reflected in the papers, and I think they've selected some very worthwhile material. But I wish they'd tried to draw links between the papers they chose to include, and suggest ways we could use the insights from such analyses of women's situation in history and in other countries to better understand our own situation, and to incorporate them into the politics of the present day women's movement.

Sue Sharpe

SLEEP IT OFF LADY

by Jean Rhys

(Andre Deutsch, £2.95)

This is a new collection of short stories by Jean Rhys of which only three have been published before. Ms Rhys is now in her eighties and the



stories reflect the sequence of her life — childhood in Domenica; London and Paris between the wars; and old age in the south of England.

Many of the stories reiter-

ate the themes of her pre-war novels: tales of women living on the margins of society, told with a harsh simplicity. She is not a polemical writer and her characters seem to accept their fate, but she does not blunt or soften the pain and humiliation of their experience, nor the occasional sour pleasure of retaliation. In 'Kikimora', Elsa cuts her dinner suit to pieces with a pair of scissors: 'Stephen heard the noise and called out: "What on earth are you doing?" "I'm destroying my feminine charm," Elsa said. "I thought I'd make a nice quick clean job of it." ' It is the sharp end to a brilliant story.

Mostly, though, I found the early stories in this collection remote. The ones about Domenica and Paris seemed more like notes for stories not yet written, or memories which have lost their significance over time. It was not until the final stories ('The Insect World', 'Rapunzel', 'I Used to Live Here Once') that I became engrossed and began to feel with the characters. The images of old age, and the fears, are described with uncompromising truthfulness. Here Ms Rhys has lost none of the skill of her novels. All the same, I think I prefer her as a novelist and would be inclined to read the novels first and this collection later. Perhaps the stories are too short and sad.

Katherine Gieve



Emmanuelle 2: "In case we have any lingering embarrassment at going to sex movies, the characters talk a lot."

[redacted]

EXHIBITION

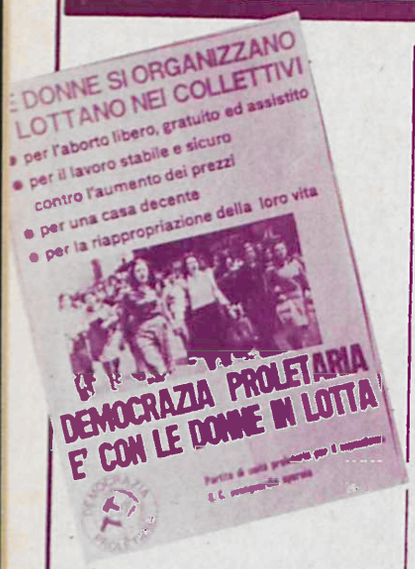
ITALIAN ELECTION POSTERS

The 1974 referendum on divorce and the abortion issue focussed attention on the condition of Italian women. This new consciousness was fully exploited in the election campaign last June: each party addressed itself to women with a poster inevitably carrying a "progressive" image.

The Centre parties associated "progressiveness" with middle-classness. For example the poster of the *Partito Republicano* depicts a pampered feminine hand holding a pencil, and the Christian Democrat poster shows a candidate surrounded by a group of other young, attractive and elegant women. It is a trendy picture, reminiscent of cigarette advertisements. The naive onlooker might easily interpret this as "liberation" forgetting that the party in question fought, with the Neo-Fascists, for the repeal of the divorce law and opposes all liberalisation of abortion.

The Communist Party poster, portraying an alert woman, is ambiguously non-





commital. The use of blue rather than red as dominant colour and the avoidance of any mention of abortion, betray their wish to appeal to the widest electorate.

The posters of the Ultra Left are totally uncompromising: *Democrazia Proletaria* and *Partito Radicale* straightforwardly proclaim their radical stance on sexual issues.

Women have doubled their presence in the newly-elected Chambers, but constituting only 6% of all parliamentarians their fight for equality of opportunities has clearly only just begun.

Luciano Cheles

The exhibition, which also contains cartoons, graffiti, tracts and other electoral art, will be at Manchester University from January 17—28, and then at Sussex, Warwick and Leicester Universities.

BOOKS for children

THE STONE BOOK
by Alan Garner
(Collins, £1.95)

TOP OF THE WORLD
by John Rowe Townsend
(Townsend, £2.50)

Alan Garner has moved away from the fantasy of his much acclaimed children's novels (*Elidor, Red Shift*, etc.) to create this short and attractive book set in the Cheshire countryside in the last century, and in so doing has written a lucid, seemingly simple tale that makes a day in a girl's life come alive.

Mary, a stonemason's daughter, has to climb right to the top of the church spire where her father is working, to hand him his baggin (lunch). Congratulated on her climb she says that she is "fed up with being a lad" and having to do boy's work. But when suddenly seized with a desire to go to the very, very top of the spire, her father lifts her onto the "slippery gold" of the weathercock. She spins round and round — "Faster! Faster!" she shouted, "I'm not frit!"

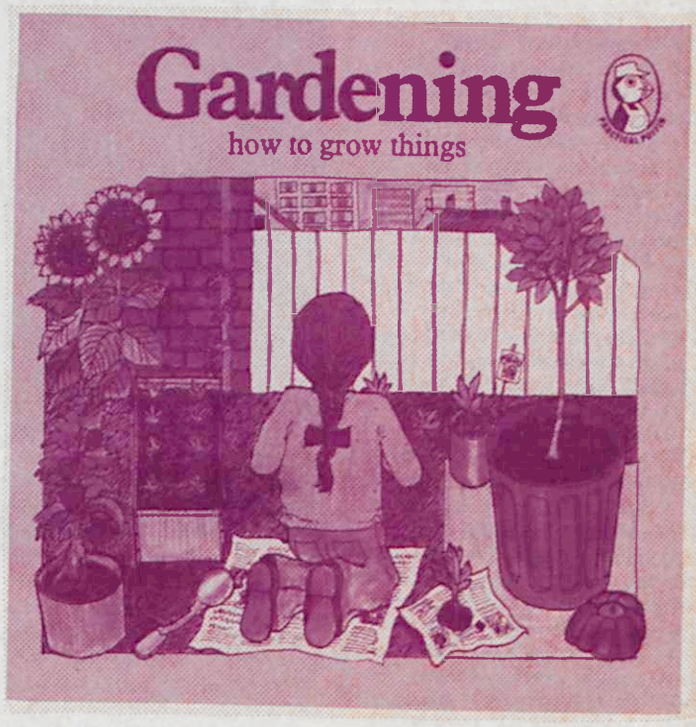
Later her father takes her into one of the quarry shafts to climb through a narrow opening only big enough for a child, to find the mason's mark of her ancestors as well as a wall painting left by people lost in history. The first girl of her family allowed to see these things, Mary's sturdy competence, her knowledge of mason's lore, her independence and understanding of herself is quietly encouraged by her father.

This little book has a lot to offer — a delicate treatment of the father/daughter bond, the detail of an artisan skill, the language of stone and rock, a healthy scepticism about religion and the written word. Children will want to return to this story with its understated dialogue and its memorable picture of Mary's dizzy climb up the steeple and her ride on the golden weathercock. Michael Foreman's sombre etchings, if sometimes too dark, add to the atmosphere.

Top of the World, by the successful children's writer John Rowe Townsend is another book where those with no head for heights will have to hold onto their chair. Kathy and Donald's parents work as caretaker and cleaner of a huge office tower block and live in its basement flat. Fed up with having nowhere to play, seven year old Donald takes the lift to the roof garden and climbs out onto a dangerous ledge. Ten year old Kathy, although frightened of heights, is brave enough to climb down beside him and hold onto him until help arrives. The characters are stock — benevolent silver-haired company director, bossy chief porter, etc., and the ending is very "happily-ever-after", but the tense moments make it all worthwhile.

Two very different pictures of positive girls from two very different established children's writers. Both books for the 7—10s.

Rosemary Stones
Children's Rights Workshop



At last a series of practical books which show children of both sexes making things. We've chosen four as prizes for the crossword on our 'Children' page: *Cooking* — food from shish-kebabs to ice-cream; mending and playing with *Bicycles; Carpentry* — building stilts and billy carts; and *Gardening*, which even shows you how to make a small jungle out of a concrete yard. (Others include *Body Tricks* and *Strange Things*.) Originally published in Australia, these books are intended for 7—12 year olds, but you don't have to be that age, or rich or white for that matter, to like them. (Practical Puffins, 50p each.)

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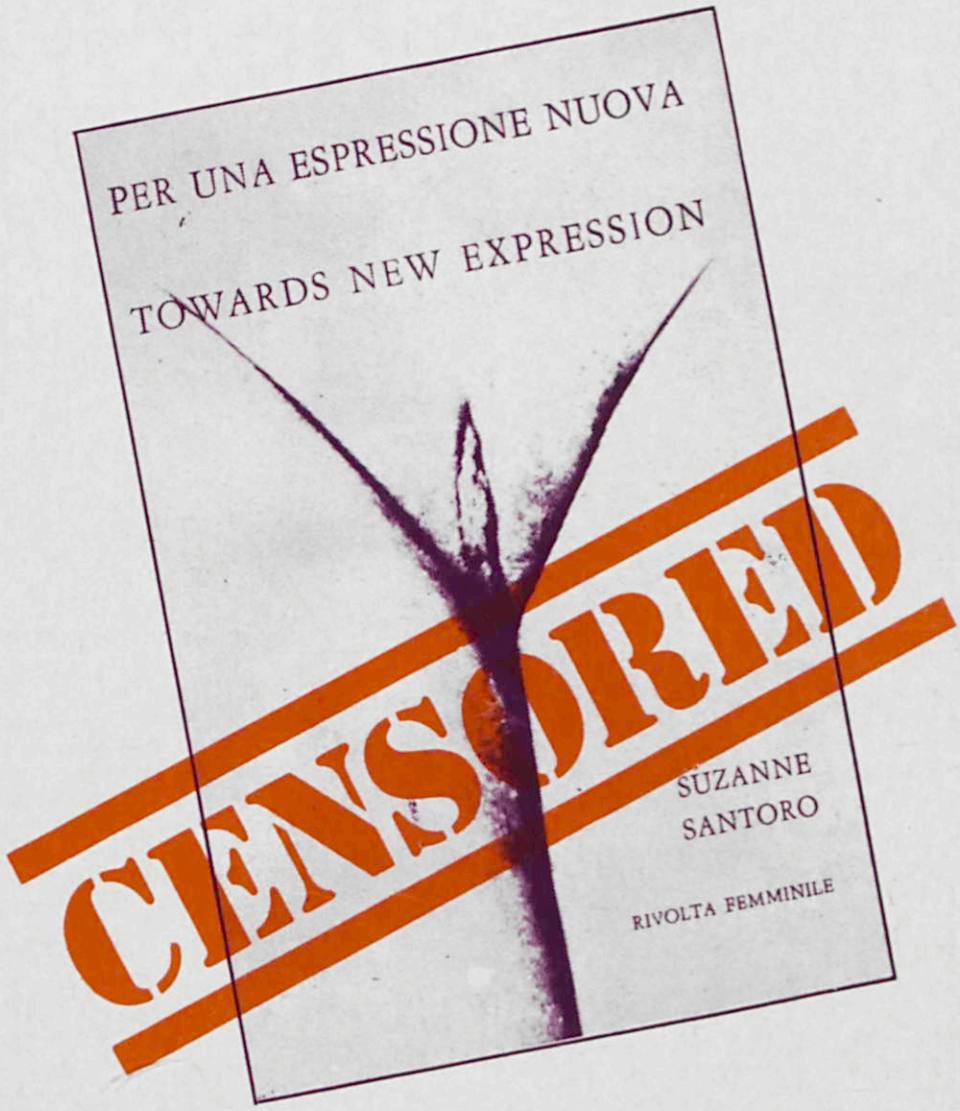
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There is increasing media uproar over who the Arts Council chooses to support, but not surprisingly we hear few complaints about the Arts Council's censorship.

Press attack on public patronage began in London last summer with Carl Andre's bricks at the Tate Gallery, continued with Mary Kelly's "Post-Partum Document" at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in October and reached a crescendo the following month with Coum's exhibition "Prostitution", also at the ICA. Tax payers' money, we were told, was being spent on dirty nappies, Tampax and pornography. Attention was briefly diverted from the cuts and the falling pound by self righteous articles trivialising the artist's intentions instead of trying to explore the relationship between art and audience. But at least we were able to look at the artists' work and draw our own conclusions. Not so with Suzanne Santoro's art. The Arts Council decided to suppress her book *Towards New Expression.* Selection is sometimes necessary but on what grounds?

Pages from *Towards New Expression*







The story begins last February, when the organisers of an Arts Council touring exhibition of books made by artists rang *Spare Rib*. They had been impressed by feminist artist Suzanne Santoro's book and wanted to include it in "Artists' Books". Could we supply her address?

Soon afterwards Suzanne, an American living in Rome, received a letter saying that her book was wanted for the show and the organisers "must have five copies by mid-February".

Suzanne was in England when "Artists' Books" opened at the ICA in August. Arriving at the exhibition, she noted that her book was entered in the catalogue as Number 103. She browsed through the show — out of the 119 books by individual artists, only ten were by women — but she couldn't find her book. There was no Number 103. Her work had been excluded though it had originally been selected and entered in the catalogue.

Suzanne's sparse, carefully produced, black and white volume was published by the Italian women's liberation group Rivolta Feminile. Suzanne is one of a number of women artists whose work is based on images of women's genitals. For example there's Ann Severson's film *Near The Big Chakra*, and Judy Chicago's work in paint and porcelain.

For most feminists vaginal imagery signifies a rejection of images by men of women, and an exploration and affirmation of their own identity. It attacks the idea of women's genitals as mysterious, hidden and threatening, and attempts to throw off a resulting shame and secrecy. Suzanne begins by demonstrating the way women's genitals have been portrayed in the history of art — "annulled, smoothed down and in the end idealized".

Suzanne established herself as an artist in the 1960's. Her art was taken seriously, she was professionally successful. "I built huge things out of rope. I did a lot of heavy, difficult sculpture. I worked with sheet metal and things like that," she says, "then I got involved with feminism — with a group called Rivolta Feminile. For three years we talked about sex."

It was 1970. In Italy the debate over vaginal and clitoral orgasm was well underway. Suzanne reacted as a person working with shape and form: "I had never really looked at myself, so I decided to take a cast of myself. We were learning how important it was for women to know how they were made. I took a cast and I was amazed by the structural solidity of it — the very precise construction and form."

She went on to photograph genitals and in *Towards New Expression* she juxtaposes the photographs with illustrations of flowers and shells. The photos are a refined examination of structure, desexualised and isolated in the centre of a blank page.

She carefully points out that the juxtaposition of flowers, shells and genitals is not intended to confirm the old identification of women with nature as against culture. She writes: "The placing of the Greek figures, the flowers and the conch shell near the clitoris is a means of understanding the structure of the female genitals." And she adds: "I just wanted to make the point that I had found structural identities, not symbolic identities."

In *The Second Sex* Simone de Beauvoir underlines the importance of knowing the structure: "The feminine sex organ is mysterious even to the woman herself . . . Woman does not recognise herself in it and this explains in large part why she does not recognise its desires as hers."

Similarly, Suzanne sees demystification as a pre-requisite for sexual self expression: "The placing of the flowers and the conch shell near the clitoris . . . is also an invitation for the sexual self expression that has been denied women till now," and which, she believes, leads to greater self knowledge in other areas of our lives. "Expression begins with self assertion and the awareness of the difference between ourselves and others."

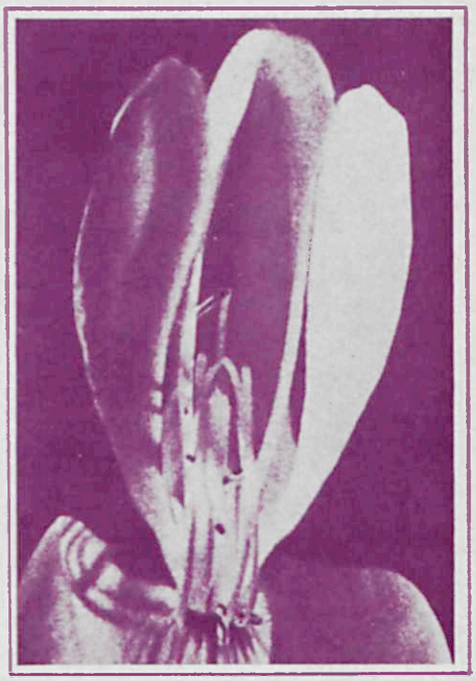
By "expression" she means creative or artistic self expression. The whole book condemns the image of women in art which damages our ability to see ourselves as creative people. The female nude — passive, available, devoid of individual desires, her body a blank canvas for men's creativity — is a major subject of art in our culture. And it's easy to take the image at face value and believe we're destined to be always the model and never the maker. Suzanne concludes: "We can no longer see ourselves as if we live in a dream or an imitation of something that just does not reflect the reality of our lives."

In Italy Suzanne's work has been widely exhibited and discussed. Some women feel that isolating a woman's genitals confirms the split between sexuality and other social relations. Others feel that we have been identified for too long by our biology, and even though Suzanne is using a biological/natural imagery to criticise the way we've been perceived in the past, it's dangerously open to misunderstanding.

She has received criticism but never censorship. *Spare Rib* asked the Arts Council why they'd suppressed *Towards New Expression*. "On the grounds that obscenity might be alleged," replied Director of Art Robin Campbell. "We are willing to







defend obscenity on the grounds of artistic excellence but considered that in this case the avowed intention of the book was primarily a plea for sexual self expression."

But if it was not considered artistically excellent, why we wonder was it selected for the show in the first place. And what sort of "obscenity" is the Arts Council prepared to defend? The answer is women used, women subjugated, women on display — in other words, Allen Jones' *Projects*, which did appear in "Artists' Books".

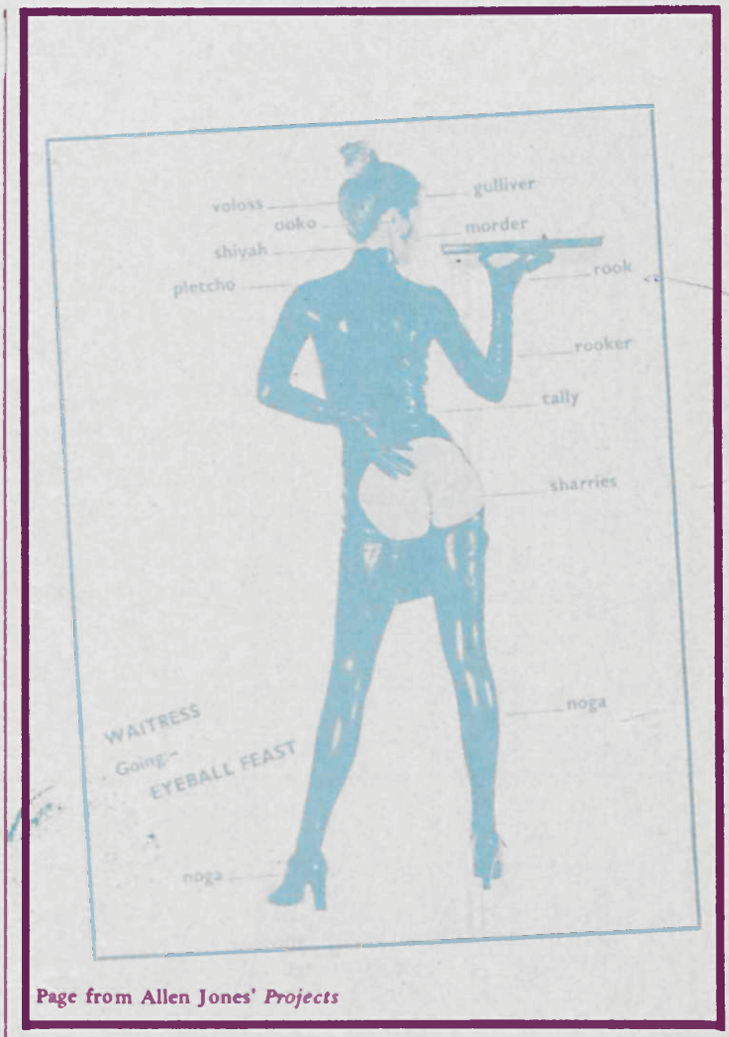
Projects, his second book, records sketches and concepts for stage, film and TV shows, including *Oh Calcutta!* and Kubrick's *Clockwork Orange*. It's all there — the shiny cat suits, bare buttocks and leather. But something is missing, as Laura Mulvey showed in her psychoanalytic interpretation of the book (*Spare Rib* 8): "Although every single image is a female form, not one shows the straight female genitals. Not one is naked. The cunt (yoni) is always concealed, disguised or supplemented in ways which distract attention from it."

Laura maintains that Allen Jones' work expresses the castration fears that women arouse in men. "It is man's narcissistic fear of losing his own phallus, his most precious possession, which causes shock at the sight of the female genitals and the fetishistic attempt to disguise or divert attention from them."

"Fetishism," she explains, "involves displacing the sight of women's imaginary castration onto a variety of reassuring but often surprising objects, shoes, corsets, rubber goods, belts, etc., which serve as a sign for the lost penis."

Hence Allen Jones equips his women with phallic substitutes such as whips, high heels, or actually turns them into phalluses: "The body unified to a maximum, rigid whole in shiny rubber." Laura concludes: "Women are simply scenery onto which men project their narcissistic fantasies. The time has come for us to take over the show and exhibit our own fears and desires."

Suzanne is trying to do just that. But the establishment isn't giving in easily. She's left talking to herself and we are provided with another example of the way women vanish from culture. Some years ago Suzanne said, "As a child I used to go to bed and pinch myself to feel if I was alive. Am I real? That feeling of not being, not living a full enough life is still with me. I think it's a female thing." Her recent experience at the hands of the Arts Council must have increased her feeling of "not being" but it's certainly shown the subversive quality of works like hers.□



Page from Allen Jones' *Projects*

by
Rozsika Parker

Notes

"Artists' Books": Hull, *Ferens Art Gallery, December 11 — January 9*; Leamington Spa, *Ibis Gallery, February 12 — March 6. For further information contact the Arts Council, 105 Piccadilly, London W1.*

Susanne is now working with the women's cooperative gallery at Beato Angelico 18, Collegio Romano, Rome. See Spare Rib *No.49.*

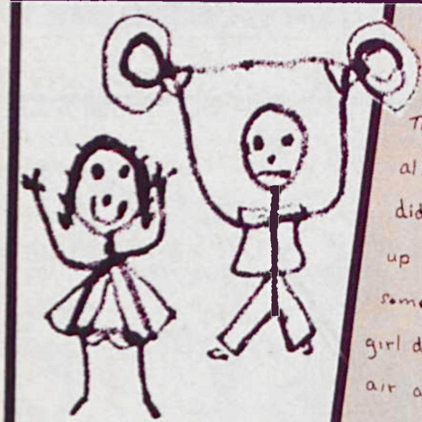
children

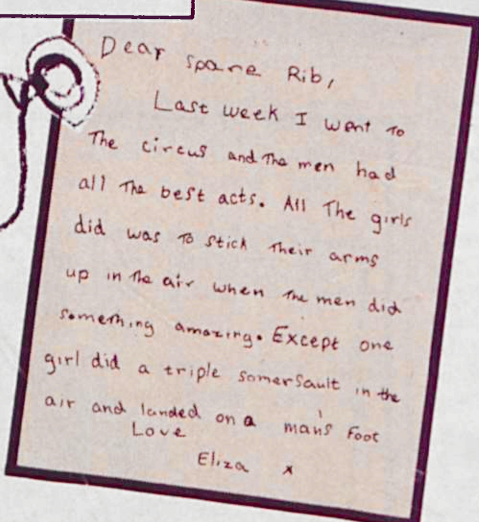
SOCIALIST PLAYGROUP

Any parents wishing to form a socialist playgroup for 0–3's in West London? Emphasis on non-sexist books, against sex stereotyping, etc. Those interested please contact Carrie, Garden Flat, 120 Horn Lane, Acton, W3. Tel 01-993-0356

TAKING ACTION

I am in my first year of a comprehensive school, where the girls do cookery and sewing while the boys do metal and woodwork. Me and my friends object to this so we have made a petition which we are going to bring up at the next school council meeting.
Sarah (aged 11)





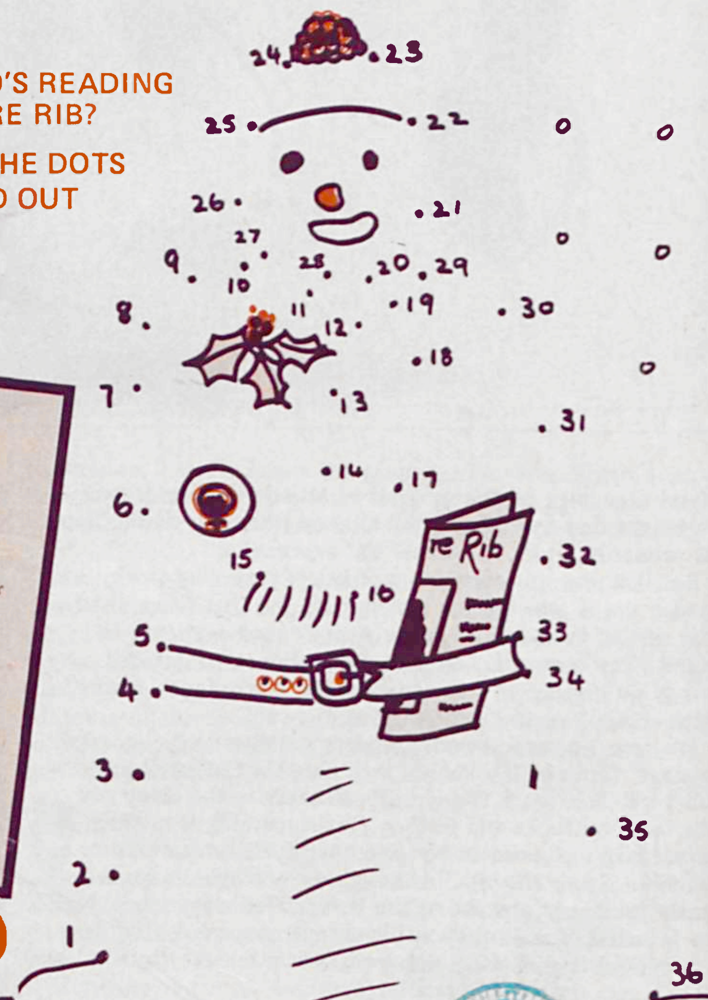
Dear Spare Rib,

Last week I went to The circus and The men had all The best acts. All The girls did was To stick Their arms up in the air when the men did something amazing. Except one girl did a triple somersault in the air and landed on a man's foot

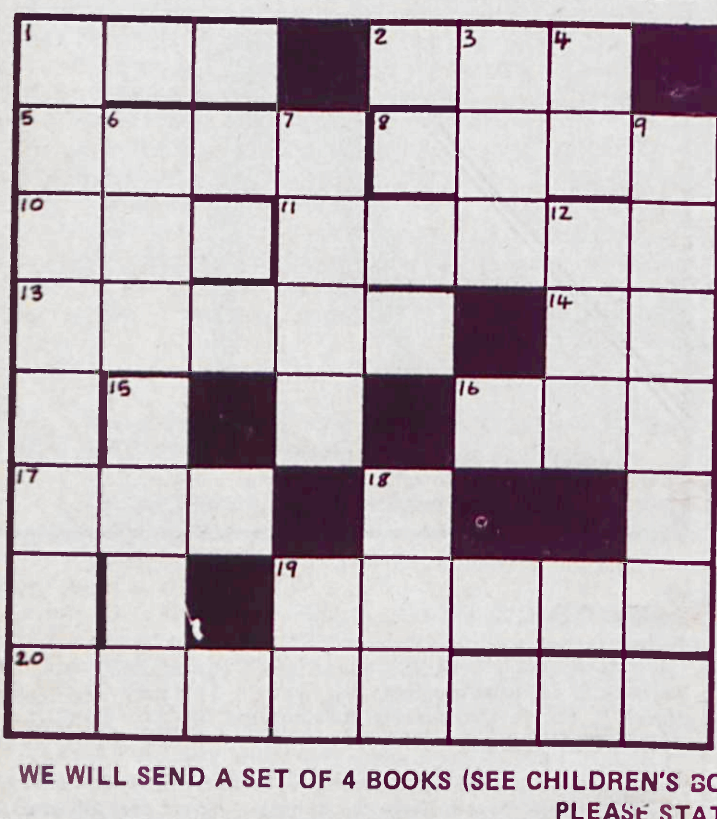
Love
Eliza x

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1 You play with it (3)
2 A slippery tree (3)
5 A strong green comic hero (4)
8 A man who tells you to do the work and gets most of the money (4)
10 You do it with numbers (3)
11 There's a lot of it about at football matches (5)
13 What the knave of hearts stole (5)
14 You say it when you hurt yourself (2)
16 Female sheep (3)
17 It was a long . . . summer (3)
19 Time-traveller whose scarf bothers him (2,3)
20 Evil frightening ice-lolly (3,5)

CLUES DOWN

1 Kids call this woman politician 'Milk-Snatcher' (8)
3 You might burn one at Christmas (3)
4 Instead of Miss or Mrs (2)
6 Boys and girls in this Irish organisation are called 'Tartans' (3)
7 What . . . Did on Sunday TV (4)
9 Where black children started fighting a white government (6)
12 What a racket!
15 Women fought for it and won it (4)
18 Iron in the earth (3)
19 Dreary Drink advertised everywhere (2)

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26	After a railly at the EGA, staff and supporters march to meet the main demonstration	Phillips, Angela	Usage Terms: © Angela Phillips. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
27	Women talk about why they marched	Oosthuizen, Ann; Fazan, Claire	Usage Terms: © Ann Oosthuizen Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial Licence; Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate all the copyright holders for Women talk about why they marched. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
27	The Kids are lucky if they get painting once a week.	Sturrock, John	Usage Terms: © John Sturrock. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
28	Women talk about why they marched	Oosthuizen, Ann; Fazan, Claire	Usage Terms: © Ann Oosthuizen Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial Licence; Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate all the copyright holders for Women talk about why they marched. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
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